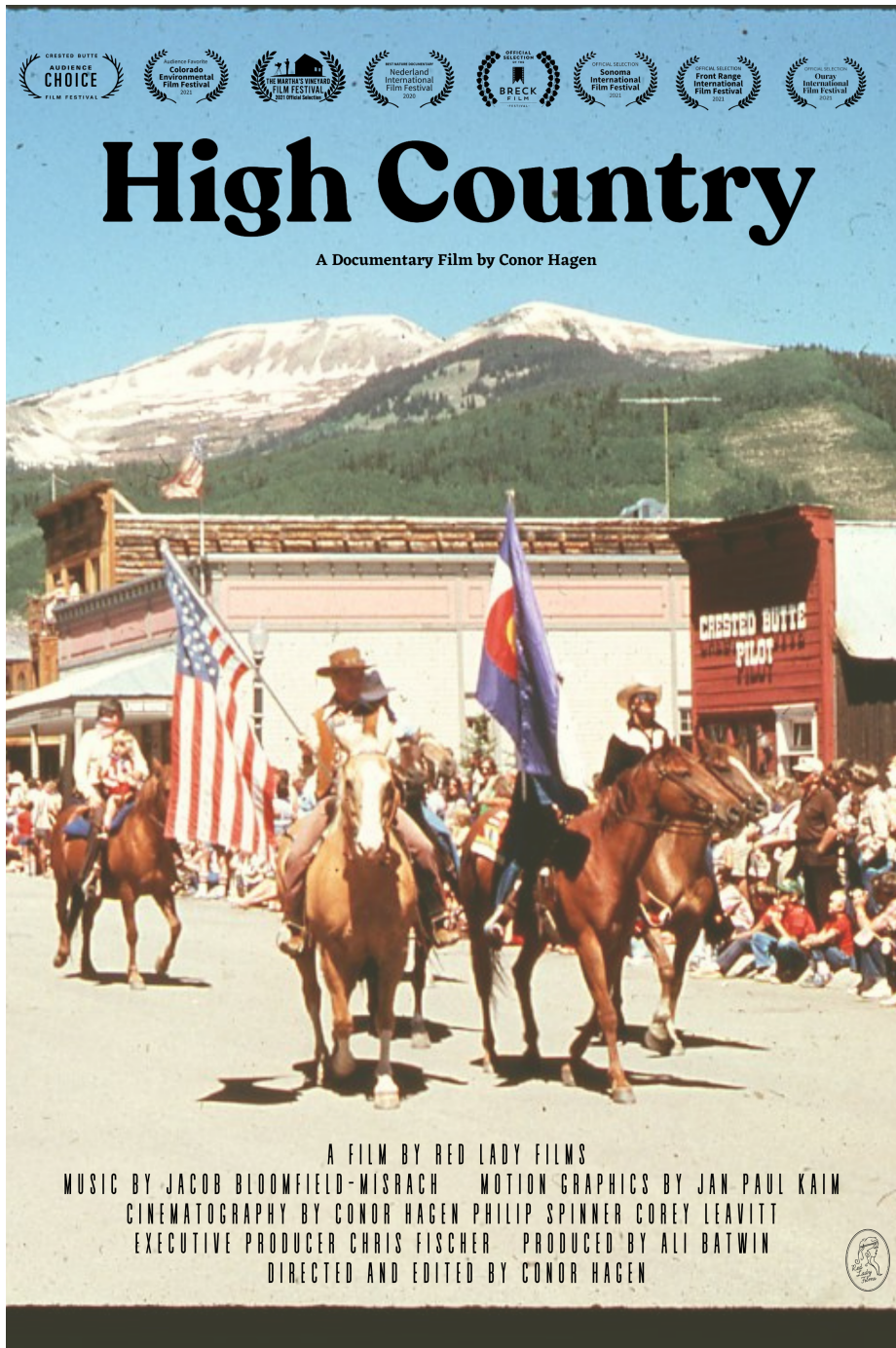


FILM
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Study Guide

HIGH COUNTRY



Discussion and Resource Guide written by Conor Hagen (Director/Editor)

This discussion guide is for academics, educators and screening facilitators. The purpose is to help you to encourage substantive dialogue and conversation, using this film as a point of departure. The guide can be used for classroom and screenings, on-campus screening events, conferences, workshops, and training sessions, and for students and faculty watching this title on the Film Platform streaming server who are keen to learn more about this film.



Our aim at Film Platform is to bring documentary film to the forefront of today's academic conversation. We strive to connect educators with documentary films which will support their teaching objectives, with films that will ask questions, provoke debate, and inspire change.

Thank you for joining the conversation!



DID YOU KNOW?

Crested Butte and the surrounding area was originally home to the Ute Indians.

ABOUT THE FILM:

Entrenched in nostalgia, **High Country** tells a timeless American story of how a community of conscientious and forward-thinking young people, disguised as hippies, happened upon a ramshackle mining town on the fringe of society and worked to conserve and protect it for years to come.

Hidden amidst the high peaks of the Rocky Mountains, Crested Butte, Colorado (USA) has always been a place defined by its people. During the 1960s and 70s, this lawless frontier town provided a hide-out, an escape, and ultimately a paradise for the wandering souls who stumbled upon it. Driven by stewardship over greed, this progressive group found themselves with a blank canvas of a town in which they would create a world of their own. Since that time, Crested Butte has continued to grapple with how best to walk the line between growth and conservation - a challenge faced by small towns across America today.

It's a film about how if you don't take care of a place you risk losing it forever.

ABOUT THE PEOPLE IN THE FILM:

The subjects in the film, the so-called "Mid-timers" were selected due to their knowledge of the local community and surroundings. Many of them are writers, activists, and/or conservationists. All of the subjects have lived in the community at one time, most of them have lived in the community for 15+ years. There were 40 interviews conducted; approx. 20 were used in the film.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS:

Conor Hagen (Director/Editor)

Conor is a native of Crested Butte, Colorado and grew up in New Mexico. He graduated with a B.A. in Film and Television Studies from the University of Vermont before moving to New York City to work alongside his mentor, Albert Maysles. He's had multiple films screen at various festivals across the United States. He is currently working on a number of different music videos and other new projects. Conor considers HIGH COUNTRY, a documentary about his hometown, to be a very personal passion project; he worked on it for over 7 years. Conor currently lives in Northern California.

Ali Batwin (Producer)

Ali has produced films in a number of countries including China, France, Spain and the Czech Republic. She's coordinated countless Google projects, created content for National Geographic, traveled far and wide with The Amazing Race, and produced exhibits for the National Center for Civil and Human Rights. Her newest side-gig: supporting new mothers and babies as a postpartum doula and lactation counselor in Boulder, Colorado.

Chris Fischer (Exec. Producer)

Chris Fischer is a chef and farmer from Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. He has produced many short films and currently stars on and produced Amy Schumer Learns to Cook and Expecting Amy.



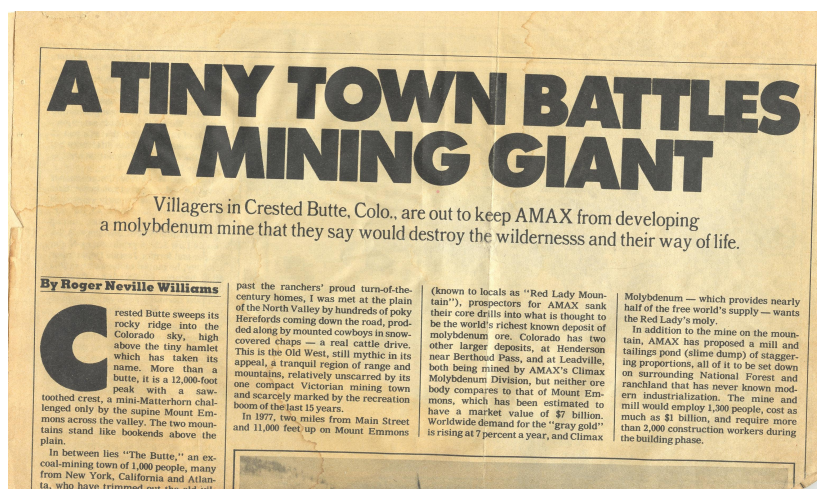
DID YOU KNOW?

Coal mining emerged in earnest during the 1880's and 1890's. The early coal miners, and majority of Crested Butte residents, preceding 1895, were Anglo-Saxon from Wales, Scotland, Germany, Ireland and Cornwall. These immigrants were followed by Greeks, Italians and Southern Europeans most from Slavic countries.

Discussion Questions

Pre-Screening Questions

- ▶ How was the West initially “settled”?
- ▶ Where did people who arrived in small towns across the West come from?
- ▶ Why is land conservation in the American West important?
- ▶ What are the threats of modern, large-scale mining to land and community?
- ▶ What ethical responsibilities do you think filmmakers face when approaching this topic?



Post-Screening Questions

- ▶ After watching this film, has your perspective changed?
- ▶ Describe a moment in the film that particularly moved / challenged / motivated you?
- ▶ What was the most surprising thing you learned from this film?
- ▶ What parallels can you draw between this film and your own experiences?
- ▶ How has this film inspired you to take action? Has this film inspired you to change your future behaviour in any way?
- ▶ Did you disagree with any of the choices the filmmakers made in this film?



DID YOU KNOW?

Unlike many of the nearby mining towns that prospered as they pulled gold from their streams and silver from their mountains, Crested Butte was a coal mining town. It was a raw and unforgiving place, and in the 1950's, as the mines dried up, the population of nearly 2,500 immigrant miners faced economic collapse.

Additional resources

Books

- ▶ “The Town That Said “Hell No!” By Paul Andersen
- ▶ “How Crested Butte Became a Tourist Town” by Roger Kahn
- ▶ “Dragons in Paradise” by George Sibley
- ▶ “Crested Butte” by Duane Vandebusch

Films

- ▶ “Territory in Conflict”
- ▶ “Ghost Town Skiers”

Websites

- ▶ <https://www.crestedbutte-co.gov/>

Articles

- ▶ <https://crestedbuttenews.com/2020/09/high-country-a-crested-butte-story-featured-at-the-film-festival/>

Other

- ▶



Additional Notes

High Country explores how a community struggles with the inevitable and constant pressures of progress and growth. This is not just a struggle for Crested Butte, but is a challenge faced by small towns across America.

With **High Country** the filmmakers hope to capture and preserve stories from this iconic time and place. It is the filmmaker's feeling that the stories from this era, and this specific generation of people, are not only important, but they are timeless representations of the expression of free will.

Arrange a Skype or Zoom Q+A with the filmmakers

Would you like to bring the filmmakers into your classroom to answer your student's questions directly? Skype or Zoom Q+As add a powerful new element to class discussions, and help to make this film truly come to life for your students. Filmmakers living on the other side of the world can come face to face with your class to share their insights on this documentary and the topics their work explores.

If this would be of interest, please get in touch and we would be happy to help you arrange this. Drop us an email at info@filmplatform.net and we will get in touch with some further information.

ABOUT FILM PLATFORM

[FILM PLATFORM](#) makes the world's best documentary films available to libraries, students and academics. Our catalogue gathers the finest contemporary documentaries fresh from the international festival circuit. We aim to bring these films to the forefront of today's academic conversation. We arrange screenings, provide library copies and make all of our films available on our innovative online streaming server for students and faculty to watch at the touch of a button.

At FILM PLATFORM, filmmakers and academics can connect, provoke debate, and inspire change.

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