

WE ARE LEGION: THE STORY OF THE HACKTIVISTS



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WE ARE LEGION: THE STORY OF THE HACKTIVISTS

Directed by Brian Knappenberger

2012 | USA | 93 min

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of documentary film by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussions with their classes, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some web links that provide starting points for further research or discussion. In separate packages, there will also be support materials available with information regarding general viewing and teaching principles for documentary film and the fundamental aspects of making documentary films.

The Film

We Are Legion is a guide into the world of Anonymous, the "hacktivist" collective with no defined leadership or structure that's responsible for numerous acts of a new Internet-based civil disobedience. Through interviews with current members and those awaiting trial, as well as with other major online figures, writers and academics, we gain an understanding of motives and what it means to be involved with a group redefining online activism. We hear from a group that began as a forum to share jokes, learning about the development of their ideology and their ability to mobilize thousands worldwide. A history of the Internet's evolution, the film traces the birth of a powerful democratic activism that's making corporations and governments very nervous. - Charlotte Cook

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VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

There are important themes in this film that have broad implications for students and their futures. Take time to activate your students' background understanding of these themes before viewing. This will help them as they come to their own understanding and develop their critical abilities.

The following three subsections, on this page, are intended to provide you with a range of pre-viewing, viewing and post-viewing activities. They are followed by a set of questions based upon the film's larger thematic domains, some follow-up questions and quotations, sample curricular outcomes, and a page of web links for further investigation.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Show students the trailer from the film's official website (<http://wearelegionthedocumentary.com/>). Have students work in small groups to try to identify themes or ideas conveyed by the trailer. Discuss with students how effective/affective the trailer is as a media piece.

Have a class discussion about Anonymous. Use the *Wired* article titled "Anonymous 101: Introduction to Lulz" (<http://www.wired.com> and type "Anonymous 101" into the search bar).

Have a class discussion about the Guy Fawkes mask and its origins. A photo essay from *Time Photos* reviews the topic in an 11-photo spread (http://www.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,2087813_2301222,00.html).

Print several of the questions or quotations from the Extension Activities section of this guide on individual sheets of paper. Have students work in small groups or with partners to discuss if they agree with the ideas.

Set a purpose for viewing by having a discussion about one or more of the questions or quotations from the Extension Activities section of this guide.

Viewing Activities

Have students take notes on, or jot down connections to, one of the thematic domains from The Big Questions/Ideas/Themes section of this guide. Ask students to find proof from the film that supports their connections.

Have students jot down five ideas for discussion, or questions that the film raised in their minds.

Post-Viewing Activities

Show the students their quotations from the Pre-Viewing Activity and see if their minds were changed or opinions altered or enhanced by the film.

Have student complete an exit note (a single small sheet of paper with one phrase or idea written on it) that demonstrates one thing they have learned, felt or decided as a result of watching the film.

Have a class discussion about online activism. Discuss the implications of some of the tactics used in the film like denial of service attack (DDOS) and trolling.

Have a class discussion about the titles members of Anonymous use for themselves and what others call them as well. Some examples include Internet denizen, cyber terrorist, cyber bully, hacktivist, online activist, hacker and internaut. Ask students which name is appropriate and why different people identify with different titles.

Have a class discussion about freedom of expression. Section 2(b) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that "Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: ... freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication" (<http://www.constitutional-law.net/expression.html>). Discuss the concept in relation to protesting in person and online. Also discuss the limits and levels of respect this type of freedom assumes.

Have the students answer the question "What freedom of expression means to me." Have students then complete a blog-writing exercise using a free blogger site. The teacher can set up one using a Moodle or on PBWorks. The assignment and rubric, titled Freedom Blogging, are found on the following pages.

THE BIG QUESTIONS/IDEAS/THEMES

There are important themes in this film that have broad implications for our students and their futures. Take time to activate your students' background understanding of these themes before viewing. This will help them as they come to their own understanding and develop their critical abilities.

Multiple Perspectives

What is the subject of this film? Can you determine the filmmakers' perspective on this subject? What evidence can you find in the film to support your view?

How does this film help you analyze and interpret points of view about issues that concern people?

Does the filmmakers' perspective foster respect for diversity and an inclusive society? If so, how?

Identity

Whose story is told in this documentary? Whose story is not told? How does this story, and the way it is told, help you understand your own community/life?

How do the people in this film identify with their community? What are the common bonds among the people in this film? What challenges do they face in expressing their identity?

What film techniques do the filmmakers use to convey the identity of the people in this film?

Citizenship

What insights does this documentary offer about the ideals of good citizenship in the community depicted in this film?

How does the film deal with issues of freedom, equality, human dignity, and individual and collective rights and responsibilities?

Change and Continuity

How does this film help you understand a community's values and its attitudes towards an issue at a particular time?

What changes do the people in the film experience? What causes those changes? What are the consequences of those changes for the people in the documentary?

Culture and Community

Which aspects of a people's culture does this film focus on? Why do you think the filmmakers focused on those aspects?

How do the images, themes and message of this film help you understand the filmmakers' attitude towards the subject?

What do you think might have been the intended audience's attitude towards the documentary subject?

Individuals, Societies and Economic Decisions

What economic systems are at work in this film? What are some of the causes and effects of the economic decisions made by the people in the film's community?

Does money play a part in the decisions being made in the film and what does it tell you about their local culture?

Power and Governance

What system of government control do we see in this documentary? How is power distributed within this society? What are the implications of that distribution on issues affecting the people's well-being and freedom?

Global Connections

What global issues are addressed in this film? What is the filmmakers' point of view on the opportunities and challenges of those issues?

Adapted from NFB Documentary Lens: <http://www.nfb.ca>

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Additional Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

Why do the protestors wear masks? What does it represent? Should they be wearing masks if they feel strongly in what they believe in?

Do you think members of Anonymous are practicing their freedoms of expression? Are there limits to their hacking? What are the implications of being anonymous online?

How is the Church of Scientology similar to Anonymous?

What is Anonymous? A freedom movement? A group? An idea? A culture? Is Anonymous chaotic good or chaotic evil? Explain.

Why were people surprised that the group wasn't mostly males? Why was this assumption made?

Is going to jail for hacking too extreme? What kind of punishment do you think is acceptable?

Would you be willing to go to jail for something you believe in?

Is hacking a form of hurting people? Does it hurt people unintentionally? Give some examples.

How can hacking become useful when combating oppressive governments?

Do you think Wikileaks is destructive or progressive? Explain.

Are the sit-ins from the 1960s at segregated restaurants any different than virtual sit-ins? Is protesting possible online?

What are more affective—cyber sit-ins or real-life sit-ins? How does our opinion matter?

Quotations From the Film to Explore

"We stand for freedom, we stand for freedom of speech, power of the people, the ability of them to protest against the government, to right wrong, no censorship, especially online but also in real life." Anonymous protestor

"What they don't seem to get is the ability for Anonymous to be everything and anything is its power." Gregg Housh, Internet activist associated with Anonymous

"It felt like you were making a difference, you know, just you yourself and you didn't even need to leave your home, you know, you just sat at your computer and followed instructions and stood up for what you believed in, so to speak. You made your say in the world and hopefully it turns out better for it." Brian Mettinbrink, former member of Anonymous

"We wanted to represent anonymity in some way when it moved into real life. I think that the Guy Fawkes mask was one of the most natural things to happen. It is the idea that none of us are as cruel as all of us. You have this massive crowd of people who are anonymous that is going to fight against a bigger thing and win." Mike Vitale, Anonymous, project Chanology

"Immediately you felt like you were at home, if you were an anon, you were at home. We had all spent years on the same place, looking at the same pictures, laughing at the same jokes. We were pretty much already friends even though we never ever met. It was very happy." Vendetta, Anonymous, project Chanology, speaks about the real life protests

*"People can rise up. People can make a change and I think for a lot of people in America, it was the first time they had seen people rise up and take down the government and say 'We're sick of this sh**, we're sick of the oppression, we're sick of living as slaves to your power.'" Anonymous protestor online*

"So much of our lives are now configured at least in part on the Internet, so we better start thinking about how we claim parts of the Internet as spaces that we can also protest." Gabriella Coleman, Wolfe chair in scientific and technological literacy, McGill University

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITY: FREEDOM BLOGGING

Section 2(b) of the Charter states that "Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: ... freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication." (<http://www.constitutional-law.net/expression.html>)

You will now answer the question, "What freedom of expression means to me," in the form of a blog. Use different examples from the film to assist in your answer. The blog has become an essential communication and information-sharing Internet-based tool in certain segments of our society. Your blog should be two paragraphs in length. You will then post your answer on a site given to you by your teacher.

Criteria	Does not meet expectations > 50%	Level 1 (50-59%)	Level 2 (60-69%)	Level 3 (70-79%)	Level 4 (80-100%)
Knowledge and Understanding	2.0 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5	5.0 5.2 5.4 5.6 5.8	6.0 6.2 6.4 6.6 6.8	7.0 7.2 7.4 7.6 7.8	8.0 8.2 8.5 9.0 10
Understands the concept of freedom of expression	Does not communicate or understand the concept of freedom of expression	Communicates with a limited degree of understanding of the concept of freedom of expression	Communicates with a moderate degree of understanding of the concept of freedom of expression	Communicates with a considerable degree of understanding of the concept of freedom of expression	Communicates with a high degree of understanding of the concept of freedom of expression
Thinking	2.0 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5	5.0 5.2 5.4 5.6 5.8	6.0 6.2 6.4 6.6 6.8	7.0 7.2 7.4 7.6 7.8	8.0 8.2 8.5 9.0 10
Use of planning skills (e.g., gathering information, organizing an inquiry, asking questions)	Does not use any planning skills	Uses planning skills with limited effectiveness	Uses planning skills with some effectiveness	Uses planning skills with considerable effectiveness	Uses planning skills with a high degree of effectiveness
Communication	2.0 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5	5.0 5.2 5.4 5.6 5.8	6.0 6.2 6.4 6.6 6.8	7.0 7.2 7.4 7.6 7.8	8.0 8.2 8.5 9.0 10
Expression and organization of ideas and information (e.g., clear, logical organization) in written form	Does not communicate issues through the use of writing skills	Communicates issues through the use of writing skills with limited clarity and effectiveness	Communicates issues through the use of writing skills with moderate clarity and effectiveness	Communicates issues through the use of writing skills with considerable clarity and effectiveness	Communicates issues through the use of writing skills with a high degree of clarity and effectiveness
Application	2.0 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5	5.0 5.2 5.4 5.6 5.8	6.0 6.2 6.4 6.6 6.8	7.0 7.2 7.4 7.6 7.8	8.0 8.2 8.5 9.0 10
Making connections within and between various contexts (e.g., past, present and future; personal)	Connections were not apparent	Makes connections within and between various contexts with limited effectiveness	Makes connections within and between various contexts with some effectiveness	Makes connections within and between various contexts with considerable effectiveness	Makes connections within and between various contexts with a high degree of effectiveness

Comments:

Total: _____/40

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
Grade 9-12 English	<p>Developing and Organizing Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience. <p>Understanding Media Texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts.
Grade 10 Civics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the need for democratic decision making. • explain the legal rights and responsibilities associated with Canadian citizenship. • explain what it means to be a “global citizen” and why it is important to be one. • analyze responses, at the local, national and international levels, to civic issues that involve multiple perspectives and differing civic purpose. • demonstrate an understanding of the various ways in which decisions are made and conflicts resolved in matters of civic importance, and the various ways in which individual citizens participate in these processes.
Grade 11 Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the sources of rights and freedoms in Canada and explain how particular rights and freedoms may conflict. • explain the dynamic nature of law, including the way in which it evolves in response to technology and changes in societal values.
Grade 11 Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relate the big questions of philosophy to their own experience, reports in the news media and their society. • demonstrate the application of philosophical theories and skills to jobs, occupations and everyday life. • demonstrate how philosophical skills that are used to address the big questions of philosophy can be used effectively in other subjects.
Grade 11 Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the key features of citizenship and democracy. • evaluate the influence of various forms of citizen action on public policy. • explain ways in which social and cultural identity influence political participation. • analyze how pressure groups, media, technology and governments influence the political process. • communicate knowledge, opinions and interpretations about events, issues and trends relating to politics and citizenship, using a variety of forms of communication.
Grade 12 Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compare the cultural, economic and political aspirations of selected groups and the effects of their actions on local, national and global geographic issues.
Grade 12 Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain how recognition of rights, responsibilities and freedoms has developed in Canada. • explain the rights and freedoms outlined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and how people can exercise them.
Grade 12 Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • illustrate the relevance of philosophical theories of ethics to concrete moral problems in everyday life. • demonstrate an understanding of how philosophical theories of ethics are implicit in other subjects.
Grade 12 Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the rights and responsibilities of individual citizens, groups and states in the international community. • communicate knowledge, opinions and interpretations about events, issues and trends relating to politics and citizenship, using a variety of forms of communication.

WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

The official website of the film includes a synopsis, the trailer news articles and photo archives.

<http://wearelegionthedocumentary.com>

CBC News: A FAQ on Wikileaks gives a brief overview on the issue of document leaking that began in 2007 in Sweden.

www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2010/07/26/f-wikileaks-background-faq.html

Globe and Mail: An article titled "How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Anonymous" discusses the positive outcomes of the group.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/technology/tech-news/how-i-learned-to-stop-worrying-and-love-anonymous/article2366626/>

A second article discusses the recent cyber-attack on the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police website.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/technology/anonymous-claims-hacking-of-ontario-police-chiefs-website/article2349974/>

Time Photos: A photo essay reviews the origins of the Guy Fawkes mask, which originated in 1606 in England.

http://www.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,2087813_2301222,00.html

Wired: The online magazine includes an article titled "Anonymous 101: Introduction to Lulz" which provides a complete overview of Anonymous.

<http://www.wired.com> (Type "Anonymous 101" into the search bar)

Wired: A second article, titled "Wikileaks Pairs with Anonymous to Publish Intelligence Firm's Dirty Laundry," looks at the relationship between Wikileaks and Anonymous.

<http://www.wired.com> (Type "Wikileaks" and "Anonymous" into the search bar)

Various Links for Lesson Plan Ideas, Media Awareness, Critical Literacy and Documentary Films

Center for Media Literacy: A U.S. website which provides several resources for making, understanding and criticizing media.

<http://www.medialit.org>

Media Awareness: A Canadian non-profit media education and Internet literacy resource library.

<http://www.media-awareness.ca>

NFB Education: Rich in resources and activities.

<http://www.nfb.ca/education>