

JOSHUA: TEENAGER VS. SUPERPOWER



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JOSHUA: TEENAGER VS. SUPERPOWER

Directed by Joe Piscatella

2016 | USA/Hong Kong | 78 min

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of *Joshua: Teenager vs. Superpower* by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussions with their class, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some weblinks that provide starting points for further research or discussion.

The Film

When he was just 18, *Time* magazine named Joshua Wong “the face of protest” after he formed the student organization Scholarism in protest of the Chinese national education plan, a plan that violated the “one country, two systems” promises made when Hong Kong was handed over to China in 1997. Joe Piscatella’s gripping and lively David and Goliath tale was a hit at Sundance—and for good reason. Piscatella captures civil disobedience in its truest form. What started out as a group of peaceful high school students skipping school turned into a coalition with Occupy Central. Hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong Chinese stood on the frontlines and forced the Communist regime to step back. Absorbing Wong’s unassailable spirit and focused intensity allows you to feel like you’re there, witnessing the birth of a great leader in what many call a watershed moment in Hong Kong history. Ravi Srinivasan

Source: <http://www.hotdocs.ca>

The Filmmaker

Joe Piscatella has written for television, radio, film and print, including numerous feature scripts and television pilots. He wrote, directed and produced the feature documentary film *#ChicagoGirl: The Social Network Takes on a Dictator* (2013), profiling a teenage girl in Chicago leading a social network in Syria. The film won a number of jury prizes at festivals in Europe, including the Cinema for Peace and Justice Award from the Cinema for Peace Foundation in Berlin. His most recent film, *Joshua: Teenager vs. Superpower* (2017), was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize and won the Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival.

Source: <https://www.futureinreview.com>

Educational package written and compiled by Irina Efimov
irinaefimov11@gmail.com

VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

The following three subsections 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 weblinks for further investigation.

Pre-Viewing Activities

To get some background on the handover of Hong Kong in 1997, have students read over this brief timeline of Hong Kong history (<http://www.bbc.com/news/> Type "Hong Kong Profile – Timeline" into the search function of the website).

As an assessment for learning, ask the students what they know about the differences between mainland China and Hong Kong. What kind of political differences are there? How do their economies differ? What has caused these differences to exist?

Have students familiarize themselves with the geographical location of Hong Kong by using Google to search maps of Hong Kong and China. A discussion could follow, based on the timeline and the maps, asking why China would assume it had rights to this region, and why Hong Kong believes it should retain its special status.

Viewing Activities

Have students complete the PBS viewing guide on documentaries (<http://www.pbs.org/pov/docs/Copies%20of%20Viewing%20Guide.pdf>). Students can revisit their completed documents as a Post-Viewing Activity.

Have students jot down three to five ideas for discussion, or questions that the film raises in their minds. As an Extension and/or Post-Viewing Activity, students can enter their questions into an online response or polling system and can vote on the questions or issues they would like to explore in further detail.

Ask students to keep track of the stages the protest movement goes through as it evolves. They could also track the stages in the government's reactions to the movement. How and why do support, tensions, radicalism and violence escalate?

Have students note changes in the vocabulary, rhetoric and slogans of the protesters. What causes these changes and what are they indicative of?

Post-Viewing Activities

Have students participate in a Socratic discussion on the film. Guidelines for Socratic discussions can be found here: <http://www.authenticeducation.org/documents/WhatSeminar04.pdf>

Discuss students' initial reactions to the film, the featured individuals and what they experienced. Did the students' feelings about these individuals or their experiences evolve over the course of the film?

Have students discuss their notes regarding the evolution of the movement, its leaders, changes of direction and goals, etc. Crane Brinton's theory on the stages of revolution could be introduced here. (Search with Google using the search words "Crane Brinton Stages of Revolution," click on Images for "Crane Brinton Stages of Revolution" and then open the first slide. This gives a simple list of the stages revolutions move through.) Ask the students if their observations during the film match Brinton's theory of how revolutions evolve. What do they think causes these stages to occur?

Ask the students if they would join Joshua's movement? What about it, or him, attracts them? Are there any students in the class who would hesitate to join the movement? Why?

Many protest movements are led by or begin through the initiative of young people or students (Paris 1968, the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, the Occupy Movement, Tiananmen Square, Arab Spring, etc.). Why do so many activist movements begin with students? Is there some quality or characteristic that is unique to young people that makes them more willing, more engaged and more passionate about social or political causes than adults are? (A related article, titled "Here's What All Successful

Students Protests Have in Common," can be found at <http://time.com/4105460/student-protests-university-missouri-president-tim-wolfe>.)

Students can find out more about Joshua Wong. There are many online sources about him, including the article titled "Joshua Wong: Meet the Teen Behind the 'Umbrella Revolution'" (<http://www.cbc.ca/> Type the name of the article into the search function of the website.) There is also an article titled "Hong Kong Protest: The Key Players," which profiles Joshua Wong and others featured in the documentary (<http://www.bbc.com/news/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website).

How much of a role does the class think social media play in the growth of protest movements and the staging of events like those seen in the film? Could the Scholarists have built up their support and interest in their cause as successfully without access to social media? (A related article, "Social Media Making It Easier to Protest, Get the Message Out," can be found on <http://globalnews.ca/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.)

How did the film increase or change the class's understanding of student protest movements and the activist experience? Were some of their initial perceptions correct, incorrect or misinformed? Are they left with any main questions that the film left unanswered?

Have students choose one of the events or characters from the film, and write a diary entry or news article as if they were part of the event.

Have students write a review of the documentary, touching on questions like: What was done well? What could have been improved? What will viewers learn from this story? Was anything left out that they would have liked to see?

Have students complete an exit note. The exit note should contain one idea that demonstrates what they learned from the film, as well as one question that they still have about the topic.

WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

About the Film

Twitter (director): <https://twitter.com/jpiscatella>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Joshua-Teenager-vs-Superpower>

Additional Resources

The Atlantic: The article "The Other Student Activists" gives a brief overview of the history of student protest movements. <https://www.theatlantic.com/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

BBC News: An article titled "Hong Kong Debates National Education Classes" gives additional background to the issues that Joshua Wong addresses in the beginning of the film, *Joshua: Teenager vs. Superpower*. <http://www.bbc.com/news/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

BBC News: An article titled "Hong Kong Pro-Democracy Groups Make Record Gains" can be found on this website, as well as links to other related articles and videos. <http://www.bbc.com/news/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

BBC News: For background on the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989, which are referred to several times in *Joshua: Teenager vs. Superpower*, see the article "Timeline: Tiananmen Square" on the BBC News website. <http://www.bbc.com/news/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

BBC News: This site has an article assessing the impact of the 1997 handover, titled "Hong Kong Twenty Years Later." www.bbc.com/news/ Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

Channel News Asia: This site has an article, "HK Activist Joshua Wong Under Police Protection After Failed Assault in Taiwan," relating to Joshua Wong's more recent activities. <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

The Guardian: This news site has an article, "Hong Kong Human Rights Situation 'Worst Since Handover to China,'" based on findings by Amnesty International. <https://www.theguardian.com/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

The Independent: The article "A Brief History of Student Protest" lists some of the most influential student protest movements from 1837 to 2013. <http://www.independent.co.uk/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

The New York Times: The article "In Hong Kong Frustration 15 Years After Return to Chinese Rule" discusses the impact of the handover in 1997, what has changed and what has not. <http://www.nytimes.com/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

SBS: For additional background on the handover of Hong Kong in 1997, this news site has published an overview titled "Timeline: Key Events in Hong Kong's History." <http://www.sbs.com.au/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

South China Morning Post: This site has an article titled "Blacklisted: Hong Kong Democracy Activist Joshua Wong Deported from Thailand at Beijing's Request." <http://www.scmp.com/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

University Affairs: This magazine has published the article "The Hot Mess of Student Activism," which focuses on student protest movements in Canada. <http://www.universityaffairs.ca/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

YouTube: There are many short videos posted on YouTube showing scenes from the Tiananmen Square uprising, including the CNN video showing a man standing in front of an army tank in an attempt to stop it. This image has come to stand for the hope and courage of those who came to Tiananmen to protest. <https://www.youtube.com/> Begin exploring by using the search words "tank man CNN."

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

Joshua Wong is described as “robotic” or “digital” by several of his colleagues. What do they mean? Why do they say that this explains how he became the leader of the movement? What other leadership qualities does Joshua appear to possess?

How are the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities portrayed in the film?

What is it about Beijing’s National Education curriculum that the students find unacceptable? What worries do they have about education in Hong Kong if it is implemented?

What frustrations do Joshua and his movement express about adults? How do they differentiate their own concerns and actions from those of adults in Hong Kong?

As tensions escalate, Joshua decides to go on a hunger strike. Would this be an effective tactic? What is he hoping to achieve with this action?

Why and when does the government decide to use force against the protesters? What is the outcome of this decision?

What did you know about Hong Kong before watching the film? What have you learned about Hong Kong as a result of watching the film?

Joshua often refers to the responsibility of his generation to act on behalf of the next generation. How closely do people associate themselves with their generation? How much does this association define them and determine the actions they are willing to take?

How different is the right to protest in Canada from the right to protest in Hong Kong?

Were you surprised by CY Leung’s willingness to speak to the students? How did Joshua react to these conversations? What were his expectations, and do you think they were realistic?

Can you think of other ways that the documentary might have been filmed or edited? How would this change the way you interpreted the film?

How do Joshua’s parents react to his leading the protest movement?

Why did the Scholarism Movement come to an end? Was this a failure on their part, or the right decision to make at the time?

Is a government ever justified in using force to suppress a protest among its citizens? If yes, what kinds of circumstances should allow authorities to resort to force?

Why is this movement referred to as the Umbrella Revolution?

What events occurred in 2015 that raised fears in Hong Kong about China’s increasingly aggressive policies toward the region?

The film begins by tracing the growth of the Scholarism Movement and its campaign against National Education. As time passes, other protests with different goals are launched. By the end of the film, what are the main issues being raised by protesters and how have they changed?

QUOTATIONS FROM THE FILM TO EXPLORE

1. *"I want to know, where are the adults?"* Joshua Wong
2. *"We are going to make history."* Joshua Wong
3. *"Instead of asking society to define success, I would just ask why I can't define what is valuable for myself and what is important for society."* Joshua Wong
4. *"The new curriculum focused on supporting nationalism. First and foremost, you must support the country. The country is the Communist Party."* Clay Shirky
5. *"What we hope to do is demand freedom of mind, freedom of speech, to show our disagreement with brainwashing education."* Joshua Wong
6. *"He was doing it because it was the right thing to do. That innocence made the parents' generation somewhat ashamed."* Jason Ng
7. *"That precursor [the Scholarism Movement] showed people that the fight for democracy might work."* Clay Shirky
8. *"It is time for total war."* Joshua Wong
9. *"Students need to show adults that [adults] don't make all the rules."* Joshua Wong
10. *"The idea was to scare people with tear gas, but more and more people started to come out. It was beautiful."* Jason Ng
11. *"Some days I have cried and think that I can't continue, or it's really tiring and I want to stop, but it's not the time to cry."* Joshua Wong
12. *"Because of the embarrassment—we really did fail—people wonder if we should have done it in the first place."* Jason Ng
13. *"The Umbrella Movement proved that if you only work on the street, that's not enough."* Derek Lam
14. *"Cheers to our wasted youth!"* Member of the Scholarism Movement
15. *"We can't keep saying, 'I am a student and I'm so pure.' It's time to face real politics."* Derek Lam

CULMINATING ACTIVITY: GETTING TO KNOW SOME OF CANADA'S YOUTH LEADERS

The goal of this activity is to have students become familiar with some of Canada's current youth leaders.

Each year a variety of media and professional organizations in both for profit and not-for-profit fields recognize young Canadians to watch for their leadership and activism. Begin your research by looking at some lists of young people who have been recognized for their leadership and activism. You can begin this search by going to the website of *Maclean's* magazine. You will find a number of lists on this page and can choose a subject for study by checking the short biographies provided. Ideally, each student in the class should research a different subject.

You should then continue to research your subject in more depth to find out about each person's background, motivation, strategies, goals, successes, what they are doing today and what their future plans might be. Write a report of one to two pages on your selected subject.

These reports can then be delivered to the class as brief oral presentations so that the class as a whole becomes familiar with a number of youth leaders and their causes.

A follow-up discussion could highlight points such as: What makes a youth leader successful? What motivates them? What strategies seem to work best? What are the main issues driving youth activism in Canada today?

ACTIVITY RUBRIC: EXAMINING THE ISSUES

Knowledge/Understanding

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Clear understanding of key issues	Student demonstrates a limited understanding of the main issues and shows little critical analysis; little effort to answer the main questions	Student demonstrates a moderate understanding of the key issues and how to conduct a critical analysis; some effort to answer the main questions was evident	Student demonstrates a considerable understanding of the key issues and how to conduct a critical analysis; most of the main questions were addressed	Student demonstrates a high level of understanding of the key issues and how to conduct a critical analysis; all of the main questions were thoughtfully addressed	/5

Thinking/Inquiry

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Ability to research, synthesize and organize additional resources, and apply them in a new context	Student demonstrates a limited ability to research, synthesize and organize additional resources, and apply them in a new context	Student demonstrates a moderate ability to research, synthesize and organize additional resources, and to apply them in a new context	Student demonstrates a considerable ability to research, synthesize and organize additional resources, and applies them appropriately in a new context	Student demonstrates an outstanding ability to research, synthesize and organize additional resources, and applies them in a new context flexibly and effectively	/5

Application

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Making connections within and between various contexts	Student makes connections within and between various contexts with limited effectiveness; their contributions were not clear or representative of their role in the debate	Student makes connections within and between various contexts with some effectiveness; their contributions were sometimes helpful and representative of their role in the debate	Student makes connections within and between various contexts with considerable effectiveness; their contributions were helpful and effectively represented their role in the debate	Student makes connections within and between various contexts with a high degree of effectiveness; their contributions were insightful and helpful in achieving consensus and understanding during the debate	/5

Communication

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Organization of ideas	The presentation contains numerous grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors; they were often off topic	The presentation contains some grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors; they mostly stayed on topic	The presentation is largely free of grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors; they stayed on topic	The presentation is free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors; they remained on topic	/5
Delivery (eye contact, audible, enthusiasm)	The student did not engage the audience	The student engaged the audience some of the time	The audience was engaged most of the time	The audience was engaged throughout the presentation	/5

Comments:

Total: ___ /25= ___ /100

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
Grade 7 & 8 Languages/ Media Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience. • identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning. • explain how various media texts address their intended purpose and audience. • evaluate the effectiveness of the presentation and treatment of ideas, information, themes, opinions, issues and/or experience in media texts. • identify who produces various media texts and determine the commercial, ideological, political, cultural and/or artistic interests or perspectives that the texts may involve. • identify the conventions and techniques used in a variety of media forms and explain how they help convey meaning and influence or engage the audience.
Grade 9–12 English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience. • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. • identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning.
Grade 10–12 Media Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the critical analysis process by using it to monitor the creative process, and by examining, interpreting, assessing and reflecting on media art works. • demonstrate an understanding of how media art works reflect personal and cultural identity, and affect personal, cultural and community values and their awareness of those values. • demonstrate an understanding of the sociocultural and historical contexts of media arts. • demonstrate an understanding of responsible practices associated with producing, presenting and experiencing media art works.
Grade 12 Canadian and International Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formulate different types of questions to guide investigations into issues, events and/or developments of national and international political importance. • analyze ways in which conflict and violence have influenced politics in and relations between various countries around the world since World War I. • analyze various ways in which domestic political policies influence a country's relations with other countries.
Grade 11 Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore topics related to anthropology, psychology and sociology, and formulate questions appropriate to each discipline to guide their research. • use a psychological perspective to explain how diverse factors influence and shape human mental processes and behaviour. • use a sociological perspective to explain how diverse factors influence and shape individual and group social behaviour.
Grade 11 & 12 Equity Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore topics related to equity and social justice, and formulate questions to guide their research. • demonstrate an understanding of a range of perspectives on and approaches to equity and social justice issues, and of factors that affect inequity and social injustice. • analyze, in historical and contemporary contexts, the dynamics of power relations and privilege as well as various factors that contribute to power or marginalization. • assess the impact of media and popular culture on equity and social justice issues. • analyze a range of historical and contemporary equity and social justice issues and the impact of economic and environmental factors on these issues. • evaluate the contributions of individuals and groups and/or movements identified with specific aspects of the struggle for equity and social justice.

<p>Grade 11 Politics in Action: Making Change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formulate different types of questions to guide investigations into issues of political importance in various communities and ways to address them. • evaluate and synthesize their findings to formulate conclusions and/or make informed judgements or predictions. • communicate their ideas, arguments and conclusions using various formats and styles, as appropriate for the intended audience and purpose. • apply the concepts of political thinking when analyzing current events relating to issues of political importance at the local, national and/or global level. • describe personal attributes, attitudes and skills that enhance an individual's ability to be a responsible citizen and contribute to the common good. • explain, with reference to the perspectives of bystanders and upstanders, why people choose to take action on, or not get involved in, political issues. • analyze the causes of some issues of political importance and how an understanding of these causes can affect the action taken to address the issues. • analyze the impact of some issues of political importance, with a particular emphasis on issues related to equity, human rights and/or the environment. • identify actions that have been taken to address some issues of political importance, and assess the effectiveness of these.
<p>Grade 10 Civics (Politics)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe beliefs and values associated with democratic citizenship in Canada, and explain how they are related to civic action and to one's position on civic issues. • analyze key rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship, in both the Canadian and global context, and some ways in which these rights are protected. • assess ways in which people express their perspectives on issues of civic importance and how various perspectives, beliefs and values are recognized and represented in communities in Canada. • analyze a civic issue of personal interest and develop a plan of action to address it. • formulate different types of questions to guide investigations into issues, events and/or developments of civic importance. • describe some civic issues of local, national and/or global significance. • explain why it is important for people to engage in civic action, and identify various reasons why individuals and groups engage in such action. • explain, with reference to issues of civic importance, how various groups and institutions can influence government policy. • assess the significance, both in Canada and internationally, of the civic contributions of some individuals.
<p>Grade 12 Challenge and Change in Society</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore a variety of topics related to the analysis of social change (e.g., social and economic factors leading to political changes) to identify topics for research and inquiry. • describe ways in which culture, tradition and language influence social trends. • analyze a variety of civic contributions, and ways in which people can contribute to the common good. • describe various psychological, social, material or cultural conditions that are used to explain social change (tension and adaptation, material and/or cultural change, globalization). • explain various means of creating social change. • explain the relationships between conformity, alienation and social change. • explain how various economic, environmental, political or sociocultural factors can lead to social change, and how other factors can create resistance to change.

Grade 12 World History Since the 15 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze the significance of various social, economic, and political policies, developments and ideas in various regions of the world since 1900. • analyze interactions between various groups since 1900 and how key individuals and social, economic and political forces have affected those interactions. • analyze the development of the rights, identity and heritage of different groups around the world since 1900. • analyze key aspects of dominant social, economic and political systems in different regions of the world since 1900. • describe interactions between various groups since 1900, and explain how key individuals and some social, economic and political forces have affected those interactions. • analyze some key changes in and contributions to identity, citizenship and heritage in different regions of the world since 1900.
Grade 12 Human Development Throughout the Lifespan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore topics related to human development, and formulate questions to guide their research. • demonstrate an understanding of social-emotional development throughout the lifespan and of ways of influencing such development. • demonstrate an understanding of various influences on personality development and identity formation throughout the lifespan.
Grade 12 Canadian and International Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate progress in removing historical and contemporary barriers to the enjoyment of equal rights by various individuals and groups, in Canada and internationally. • analyze various issues associated with addressing human rights violations, with reference to specific past and/or present examples of violations in Canada and around the world. • analyze the contributions of various individuals and groups to strengthening protection for human rights in Canada and internationally. • analyze, from a legal perspective, contemporary circumstances in which individual or group rights and freedoms are threatened or limited. • analyze from a legal perspective the concept of morality as well as differing definitions of certain criminal offences in the domestic law of various countries.

The Overall Expectations listed above are from the *Ontario Curriculum*. Complete course descriptions, including all Overall and Specific Expectations can be found at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html>