



***The Wave* Teacher Resource**

A great deal of thanks and appreciation goes out to the members of our Teacher Advisory Committee, who volunteer their time to assist in the development of Sprockets teacher resources.

TITLE: *The Wave*

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Germany

RELEASE YEAR: 2008

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE: German

DIRECTOR: Dennis Gansel

RUNTIME: 101 minutes

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:

1. *Before the Fall* (2004)
2. *Girls on Top* (2001)
3. *The Dawn* (2001)
4. *The Phantom* (2000)

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Religious Studies, Health and Physical Education, Social Science, Media Studies and Humanities, Social Justice, Equity Education, Character Education.

FOCUSING QUESTION:

Based on a true story, *The Wave* explores both dictatorship and fascism in our society. Consider the role fascism has played in history – could history repeat itself?



SYNOPSIS:

Based on real events, *The Wave* is a powerful and thought-provoking look at fascism taking hold among an ordinary group of high-school students. To help his students understand life under a dictatorship, popular teacher Rainer Wegner devises an experiment. Setting himself up as leader, he asks the class to address him formally, tells them all to wear the same "uniform" of a white shirt and blue jeans, and emphasizes that there is strength in unity and that the members of the group should look out for each other. A logo, salute and name – The Wave – soon follow. The class responds enthusiastically, enjoying a new sense of camaraderie and collective purpose. Soon students from other classes become eager to join the movement. As The Wave grows, so does intolerance toward those outside the group, and violent confrontation threatens to emerge.

Featuring excellent performances and an engaging energetic style, director Dennis Gansel's film presents a convincing and compelling look at how quickly group mentality can envelop youth, and how crowd behaviour can veer toward extremes. Providing insights into the aspects of fascism and cults that appeal to teens searching for belonging, *The Wave* is an intelligent and timely cautionary tale about the potential for history to repeat itself. The screening will be followed by a discussion of the issues raised in the film, with a focus on the means by which cults attempt to entice youth to join them.

N.B. Some violence, youth drinking.

Recommended for grades 10 through 12

AN EDUCATOR'S COMMENTS ON THE FILM:

"Teenagers will no doubt relate to and appreciate this film. The end is intense and may be shocking to some students."

PRE-SCREENING PREPARATION:

The Wave is a film based on the real life events of a teacher who decided to teach his class about dictatorship through a formal two-week experiment. The complete story is available at <http://www.thewave.tk>.



The Story of *The Wave* contains themes of exclusion versus inclusion, students who exhibit fascist behaviour, dictatorship and coercion through violence. Students may be able to relate to the feeling of being excluded in their school or community because of differences such as race, sexual orientation, religion or ethnicity. The following exercise provides students the opportunity to explore feelings associated with exclusion and inclusion through a dramatic activity.

Objectives:

Explore and demonstrate examples of inclusion and exclusion through dramatic tableaux.

Activity:

1. Instruct students they will be forming dramatic groups in which they will create frozen scenes (tableaux) from personal experiences they have encountered relating to being included or excluded from their school or community.
2. Have students divide into groups of five.
3. Ask some of the groups to brainstorm examples of when they have witnessed or been a victim to exclusion in their school or community. What feelings did this experience provoke?
4. Ask the remaining groups to brainstorm examples of inclusion they have witnessed in their school and community. What feelings did they feel or witness?
5. Have each group create a tableaux that illustrates examples of inclusion or exclusion (depending on which topic they were assigned) that happen every day in their school, and then deconstruct the feelings involved.
6. When the first group is ready to present, ask students in the audience to put their heads down. Ask the students to keep their heads down and eyes shut as long as they hear music playing. Meanwhile, the group preparing the tableaux can get into place. When they are ready, stop the music and this will signal the audience to look up and open their eyes.
7. An extension of this exercise is to have a student in the audience tap a person in the tableaux. That student must come to life and recite a sentence or two about who they are and how they feel about the situation.
8. Have remaining groups present their tableaux.

POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY:

Propaganda was a common technique used to persuade other students to join *The Wave* in the film. In 1937, the U.S.-based Institute for Propaganda Analysis published a list of propaganda techniques that may be used to target a mass crowd. The list included political speeches, art work, commercials, advertising or even strategic behaviour among a group of people. Below is the list of some of the techniques used in propaganda. Visit the online resource *Propaganda Critic* for details and definitions on each technique at <http://www.propagandacritic.com>.

1. **Name-calling** - "The name-calling technique links a person, or idea, to a negative symbol."
2. **Glittering generalities** - "They mean different things to different people; they can be used in different ways."
3. **Transfer** - "Transfer is a device by which the propagandist carries over the authority, sanction, and prestige of something we respect and revere to something he would have us accept."
4. **Testimonial** - "The most common misuse of the testimonial involves citing individuals who are not qualified to make judgments about a particular issue."
5. **Plain folks** - "By using the plain-folks technique, speakers attempt to convince their audience that they, and their ideas, are "of the people." The device is used by advertisers and politicians alike."
6. **Bandwagon** - "With the aid of all the other propaganda devices, all of the artifices of flattery are used to harness the fears and hatreds, prejudices and biases, convictions and ideals common to a group."



Complete the chart below to help you draw conclusions about the propaganda techniques used in *The Wave*.

Examples of Propaganda techniques used in <i>The Wave</i>	Type of Propaganda Technique	The Goal of the Propaganda Technique

CONCLUSION/WRAP-UP:

Conduct a journaling exercise with students exploring the themes of cults, group persuasion, and inclusion and exclusion raised in *The Wave*. Write the following questions/statements on the board and have students respond to them in their journal.

1. What concrete things could you do to change the culture of our school?
2. Manipulating people to get them to do what you want them to do is wrong.
3. Everyone has a right to believe what he/she wants to believe.
4. Everyone has a right to do what he/she wants to do.



5. People who join cults are searching for something, such as meaning in their lives, spiritual fulfillment, a feeling of belonging or a substitute family.
6. Nobody can talk me into doing anything I don't want to do.

(Source: <http://www.factnet.org>, 2008)

Have the class come up with an action plan concerning how to address and change issues surrounding exclusion in their school and then carry out their plan.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

1. International Cultic Studies Association
<http://www.icsahome.com> – “a global network of people concerned about psychological manipulation and abuse in cultic groups, alternative movements, and other environments.”
2. Propaganda Critic
<http://www.propagandacritic.com>
Propaganda Critic provides definitions and examples of propaganda techniques.
3. All Politics: Candidates
<http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1996/candidates/ad.archive>
The CNN political ad archive features some of the most famous political ads used since 1952.
4. The Official Film Website for *The Wave*
<http://www.thewavemovie.co.uk>