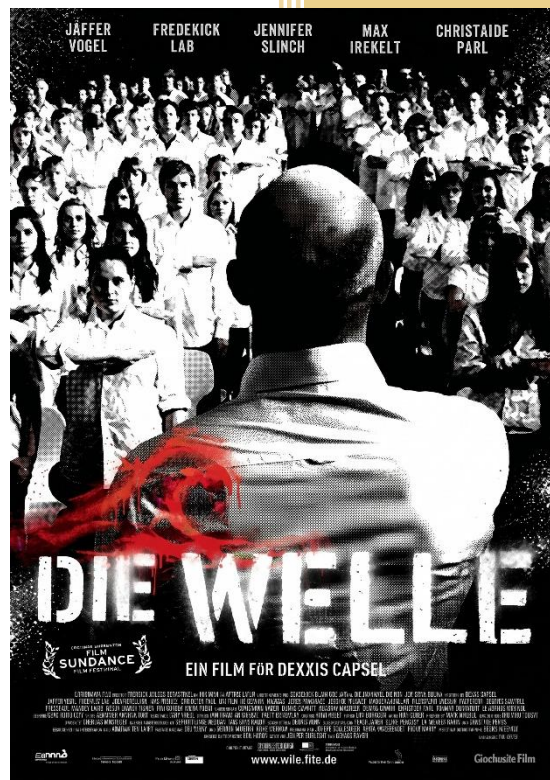


2026

# Film Club Companion: Die Welle



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World Cinema with Anna

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# Die Welle (The Wave): 10 Discussion Questions

World Cinema with Anna | Printable Classroom Worksheet

Name: ..... Date: ..... Class: .....

**Before you start:** These questions are for use after watching *Die Welle* (*The Wave*, 2008), directed by Dennis Gansel. They discuss the whole film, including the ending. The film is rated 15 in the UK and contains themes of authoritarianism, bullying, violence and a tragic conclusion. *Die Welle* is a fictional drama inspired by a real classroom experiment led by teacher Ron Jones in California in the late 1960s.

**How to answer:** Think on your own for two minutes and jot down a few notes. Then share your ideas with a partner, and finally with the class. There are no right or wrong answers, but give reasons for your views and refer to scenes from the film. Listen respectfully, and disagree with ideas, not people.

## Conformity

1. Why do the students first join the project? What does each seem to gain: belonging, status, structure or excitement?

Your notes: .....

.....

2. Which small steps (seating, rules, a uniform, a name, a gesture) turn a class into a group? Which step was the turning point for you?

Your notes: .....

.....

3. Karo refuses to join and eventually leaves the class. What does her decision cost her, and why is it so hard to disagree with a group?

Your notes: .....

.....

## Leadership

4. When does Rainer move from being a teacher to being the leader of a movement? Can you name the moment?

Your notes: .....

.....

5. What is the difference between inspiring people and manipulating them? Which of the two does Rainer do?

Your notes: .....

.....

6. Which warning signs does Rainer ignore? At what point should he have ended the experiment?

Your notes: .....

.....

## Responsibility

7. Who is responsible for what happens in the film: Rainer, the students, the school, or everyone? Defend your view.

Your notes: .....

.....

8. What stops people from speaking up inside a group? What would help someone find the courage to do it?

Your notes: .....

.....

9. How do you respond to the justification, 'I was just following the group'? Does it change anything about who is to blame?

Your notes: .....

.....

## Connecting with The Counterfeiters

10. In *The Counterfeiters* (*Die Fälscher*, 2007), prisoners are forced to choose between cooperating and resisting under real persecution. How is that different from the students' choice to join the Wave, and why does the difference matter for responsibility?

Your notes: .....

.....

## Teacher notes (remove before printing)

- **Time:** about 30 to 40 minutes for all ten questions. For a shorter lesson, choose one question from each section.
- **Suggested structure:** think on your own (2 minutes), discuss in pairs (5 minutes), then whole-class discussion (10 to 15 minutes).
- **What to listen for in Questions 1 to 3:** students recognising belonging, symbols, uniforms and exclusion as the tools that build conformity.
- **What to listen for in Questions 4 to 6:** the difference between charisma and legitimate authority, and how a leader's good intentions can still cause harm.
- **What to listen for in Questions 7 to 9:** shared responsibility, the role of bystanders, and what moral courage costs.
- **Question 10:** this needs a viewing of *The Counterfeiters*. If your class has not seen it, replace it with: Where in your own school or community could a group like the Wave form, and what would be an early warning sign?
- **Keep the comparison respectful:** a classroom experiment is not the same as genocide, so encourage students to explore differences as well as similarities.
- **Age suitability:** the film is rated 15 in the UK. Please check it is suitable for your students before screening it.
- **Going further:** the full guide, *Teaching Die Welle: 100 Discussion Questions on Conformity, Leadership and Responsibility*, offers more questions on each theme and works well around Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January.