



The Hate U Give

– Using the film as a doorway to social issues, democracy and citizenship in the US

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In 2017, writer and former rapper Angie Thomas published her first novel, *The Hate U Give* (THUG). It became an instant hit with teens and adults alike and reached number 1 on the *New York Times* bestseller list for young adult fiction, where it remained for 50 weeks. In interviews, Angie Thomas has stated that she aims to “show truth and tear down stereotypes” in her writing. The novel has won many prestigious awards and has already been translated into a number of languages. The critically acclaimed film adaptation was released in the US in October 2018, and in Norway in March 2019.

Before watching the film

To better understand the context in which the story is set, it is useful to know something about racial profiling and the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM).

1. Work in pairs. Read the short texts below and check out the links. Ask each other questions to make sure you have a basic understanding.

Racial profiling is when certain people are targeted because of their ethnic background, race or national origin. Examples of racial profiling could be police officers who stopping and searching a person mainly because of his or her skin colour, or security guards asking a passenger to leave an airplane because the hijab she is wearing makes other passengers nervous. In the US, there have been many cases in recent years where security guards reporting a passenger as suspicious for reading from the Qur'an.

To find out more about racial profiling in the US, read this article from CNN: <https://cnn.it/2lv9B18>

Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a people's movement that first started as a hashtag on social media in 2013, after a neighbourhood watchman was acquitted of fatally shooting a 17-year-old African American high school student. The boy was unarmed. The movement received international attention when protesters took to the streets and violent riots were sparked in Ferguson, Missouri, following the shooting of another African American boy in 2014. Since then, activists have organized thousands of demonstrations across the US to protest against cases of police violence and racial profiling, but some have also been criticized and accused of vandalism.

To learn more about how the Black Lives Matter movement was founded, watch this TED-talk: <https://bit.ly/2gOuyMB>

2. Watch the novel's author Angie Thomas explain what inspired her to write *The Hate U Give* in this short video: <https://bit.ly/2rzYGqk>

Comprehension tasks

1. Describe Starr's home life.
2. How is her life at school different?
3. Quite early in the film, there is a scene where Starr's father teaches his children how to act if they are stopped by a police officer. What does he tell them to do?
4. Explain in your own words what happens when Starr and Kahlil leave the party together.
5. At the police station, Starr gives a detailed explanation of what happened before the shooting, but then the detective shifts her focus to Khalil's past. Why do you think she does this, and how does Starr react?
6. Why does Starr need to keep her identity as a witness secret?
7. How do Starr's parents react when she brings her boyfriend home?
8. What or who makes Starr change her mind about being interviewed and testifying in the court hearing?
9. How do people in Starr's neighbourhood react when the jury does not indict the police officer who shot Kahlil?
10. Starr becomes increasingly active and takes on a different role. What does she do, and why? Who tries to stop her?
11. How does Starr's little brother, Sekani, suddenly change the course of events when they are threatened by King, the gang leader?
12. In the final scene, Starr makes a promise. What is it?

Some of the central characters in the film:

Starr Carter

Chris, Starr's boyfriend, who goes to her school

Kahlil Harris, Starr's childhood friend

Lisa Carter, Starr's mother

Maverick Carter, Starr's father

Carlos, Starr's uncle and a police officer

Sekani Carter, Starr's younger brother

Seven Carter, Starr's older half-brother

Kenya, Seven's half-sister

King, a local drug dealer and Kenya's father

April Ofrah, an activist who helps Starr speak up

Hailey, one of Starr's friends from her school

Maya, one of Starr's friends from her school

Topics for discussion

1. Many of the characters in the film act bravely in difficult situations. Give examples of such acts and discuss what you think made the characters show courage in these situations.
2. Phones play a significant role in the story, not only for communication, but also for recording important incidents.
 - a) How does using her phone give Starr power in a particular situation where she otherwise wouldn't have had any?
 - b) Many people are quick to get their phone cameras out when accidents happen. What are the ethical dilemmas involved in such behavior? Discuss both positive and negative consequences.
3. The novel's author says that she sees writing books as a form of activism. Do you agree? Can stories like this one, whether it is in the form of a book or a film, make people act, speak up or make a stand?

Further topics to explore

1. Search online for information on the film's soundtrack.
 - a) Do you recognize any of the artists or songs?
 - b) Choose one of the songs from the soundtrack and study the lyrics. What is the theme of the song? Would you say it is relevant to the film's theme?
 - c) What do you think is the purpose or function of music in film? Discuss how music can:
 - enhance the storytelling
 - create a mood
 - manipulate our emotions
 - set the time and place
 - introduce characters
2. The novel's author, Angie Thomas, has said that the rapper and poet Tupac Shakur (1971-1996) has been an important inspiration for her writing. One of his tattoos gave the novel its title, and his music is also used in the film.
 - a) Tupac's tattoo reads THUG LIFE. If you didn't catch the explanation while watching the film, find out what the letters stand for and its symbolic meaning by watching this short video: <https://bit.ly/2vhsA5F>
 - b) Search online for his poem "The Rose that Grew from Concrete". Read or listen to it.
 - c) Sum up in a few sentences what you think the poem is about, and how it is relevant to the message and characters in *The Hate U Give*.

3. This image, by award-winning photojournalist Jonathan Bachman, was taken at a rally in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 2016. The rally was organized in response to recent killings of black men by the police. The photo tells a clear story, and when it hit social media it immediately went viral.

- Describe the situation you see in the photo. Be specific.
- What makes this such a powerful photograph?
- What do you think happened just seconds after this photo was taken?



Image source: Jonathan Bachman Photography

4. The Black Panthers, Dr Martin Luther King Jr, and Tupac Shakur are a few real-life activists who are mentioned or referred to in the film. Choose an activist you would like to know more about, select information from reliable sources, and create a short digital presentation.