

EDUCATION SCREENINGS *at the* MILWAUKEE CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL

September 27-October 11, 2012

Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry Education Screening

Dear Teachers,

Welcome to the Milwaukee Film Education Screenings! We are delighted to have you and thankful that so many teachers are interested in incorporating film into the classroom!

So that we may continue providing these opportunities, we ask that your class **complete at least one activity** in conjunction with the screening of *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry*. Your cooperation ensures that we are able to continue applying for funding to bring in these films and offer them to you (and literally thousands of other students) at a low cost.

This packet includes several activities and discussion questions. To fulfill this requirement, your students may write about their discussion of, or reaction to, the film, or complete any of the activities included. Journal entries about completing any of the activities also count. We may post some of the best writings and activities on our website (with students' first names and school only) later in the semester.

Please photocopy or scan your students' activities and email them to susan@mkefilm.org or mail them in **by November 1** to:

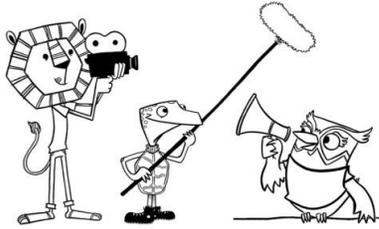
Milwaukee Film
Attn: Susan Kerns
229 E Wisconsin Ave Suite 200
Milwaukee, WI 53202

All screenings of *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* additionally fulfill the following Common Core English Language Arts Standards: SL9-10.1, SL11-12.1

We also have included information about our Collaborative Cinema program in your folder. Collaborative Cinema is a free teen screenwriting program, and one student's script is made into a film each year. It's truly a phenomenal experience and unparalleled in the U.S.. I am available to visit classrooms to discuss Collaborative Cinema and engage in a short screenwriting activity with students throughout the fall semester. Please let me know if you would like me to visit your classes.

Thanks again, and we'll look forward to seeing you next year!

Susan Kerns
Education Director, Milwaukee Film



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How to Read a Film: Questions to Consider for *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry*

Use these questions to spark dialogue about the film with your students after viewing *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry*. Consider splitting the class into small groups to discuss one or two of the questions below, and then allow the groups to share their insights with the entire class. Another option is to use these questions as journal entry prompts.

What *happens* in the film? What important events occur? What is the resolution? (Is there a resolution?) Who are the important characters?

*These questions help students start to talk about plot, story, plot/narrative structure, character development, and conflict.

What is the film *about*? What themes arise? What morals or messages are in the film?

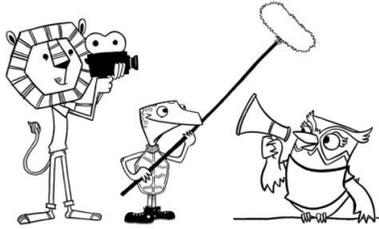
These questions help students think about a film's themes, messages, and morals – and seeing them as different from the story itself. In other words, a film can be about a Chinese artist as well as about human rights. Themes for *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* might include free speech, the place of art in society, uses of social media, activism, and international politics.

Do students in your class see different messages in the film? What differences do people see?

Discussing how students read the film differently helps students understand that films often express more than one message, and these messages speak differently to different viewers.

How does your real life affect how you understand a film? In other words, what might you notice or respond to differently in the film if you were of a different race or gender, or if you lived in a different city/country than you do?

One difference between documentaries and fiction films is that documentaries sometimes include images of people filming events or people attempting to interrupt the filming of events. Think of a couple of times when this occurs in the film. Why is it important to show scenes that people do not want you to see? Why is it noteworthy in other instances to see people recording events that are taking place?



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Documentaries: Building a Story Out of Real Life

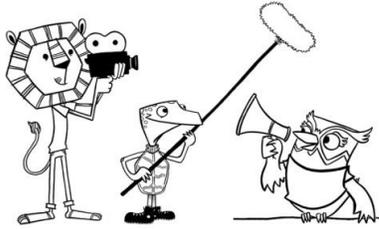
Common Core English Language Arts Standards: W.9-10.2b, W.9-10.3a-d, L.9-10.3; W.11-12.2b, W.11-12.3a-d, L.11-12.3

Documentary films like *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* tell “true stories” that present events as they actually happened. However, non-fiction documentary films are just as constructed as fiction films. In other words, **directors** and **editors** of documentary films watch hundreds of hours of **footage** to find the most interesting events, funniest or most emotional moments, and most beautiful images. They then **edit** these **shots** together to create drama, tension, or comedy, and they usually use a traditional narrative that has a **beginning (exposition), conflicts (rising action), climax, and resolution**. *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry* has a less traditional narrative structure, however, where there’s really no resolution at the end. You might think about what this lack of resolution does for this film.

Thinking about Reality versus Documentary: Creating your Documentary Treatment

Imagine you are creating a documentary about someone you know well. This might be a family member, friend, teacher, coach, etc. What story about this person do you want to tell? Even though creating a documentary is often an unpredictable experience, having a plan is important. Use the chart to create a **treatment** for your documentary film. A treatment is a short (less than one page) explanation of what your film’s story, characters, and major events will be.

What is my Documentary’s Narrative?	
What do you want your audience to see or understand about the person you’ve chosen? What is interesting about his or her everyday life? What events do you want to show? What past events do you want this person to discuss?	
Who are the Characters in my Documentary?	
Aside from your main subject, what other characters are important to this person’s story? What role will they have in the film? Will they be comic relief? Will they offer testimony about your focal subject?	
What are the B-roll images for my Documentary? <i>B-roll is additional footage that is not an essential part of the action.</i>	
B-roll is used to create atmosphere or add interest to scenes. Footage of the things in a room, buildings, cityscapes, etc. are examples of B-roll. What sorts of objects or places would you include to give your viewers a sense of the environment that surrounds your subject? What kind of feeling can a place evoke: clutter and disorder, quiet calm, fun, sleek stylishness, business, etc.?	



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Never Retreat, Retweet!: Using Social Media

Common Core English Language Arts Standards: RI9-10.1-2 RI9-10.6-7, W9-10.2a-b, W9-10.6; RI11-12.1-2 RI11-12.6-7, W11-12.2a-b, W11-12.6

WI Model Academic Standards: Information Technology A12.4, D12.2, D12.4 Art and Design G12.3, H12.6

Throughout the film we see Ai Weiwei take to Twitter to broadcast his experiences and ideas internationally. He explains that online media (like blogs and Twitter) have the power to “change public opinion.” One of the art experts interviewed says that for Ai Weiwei “transparency” is as important as liberty. He uses Twitter to make what’s happening in China transparently seen by the international community.

At the end of the film, we learn that Ai Weiwei’s online activity is being monitored and restrained by the government. He is being censored. The film’s website suggests that one way to take action and get involved is to keep Ai Weiwei’s words alive:

Due to restrictive bail conditions, Weiwei's ability to freely express himself online is now fragile and never guaranteed. We invite you to keep his voice a loud part of the digital conversation and empower one another to engage, create, and localize Weiwei's global cause.

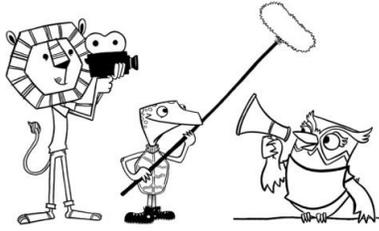
The filmmakers go on to ask us, the audience to “retweet Weiwei's quotes using hashtag #NeverSorry and let us continue his example!”

⇒**TEACHERS!** You might not want your students to create Twitter accounts for privacy or other reasons. If you’d rather they not, you can skip the first section here. Part Two does not require a Twitter account. You might want to make a class Twitter and retweet the tweets they select to get them into the world.

Part One: Making a Twitter Account

To start this project, you’ll need a Twitter account:

1. Go to <http://twitter.com>
2. In the section that says “New to Twitter? Sign up” fill in your name (the name you’d like to have show up on Twitter), your email address, and a password. Click “Sign up for Twitter”
3. The next page will show you the information you just entered plus a suggested Twitter username. You can change this to something you like and will remember. (It will tell you if the name is taken already.) Select if you’d like to remain signed in (probably not) and if you want Twitter to use your web browsing history (up to you). Read the Terms of Service to see what Twitter will do with your information and the rules for using the service.
4. Click “Create my account” when you are ready.
5. Next you will see a tutorial about how to use Twitter. Follow along and see what this website does and how it works. During the tutorial, you’ll be asked to find five people to follow. It will show you some famous people on Twitter, but you might want to add Ai Weiwei (@aiww), the film *Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry*



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(@AWWNeverSorry), and/or the English translated tweets of Ai Weiwei (@aiwwenglish). You also might want to follow your teacher and classmates.

6. You can skip ahead in the tutorial by choosing "Skip this step" at the bottom of the screen.
7. At some point, go back to your email account that you used to create your Twitter account. Confirm your Twitter account and gain full access to all of its features.

Part Two: Finding Tweets to Retweet

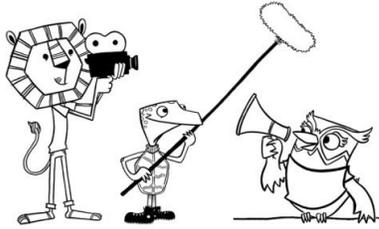
Ai Weiwei mostly tweets in Mandarin Chinese. You can find fairly up-to-date translations of his tweets online on a blog (<http://aiwwenglish.tumblr.com/>) and a twitter account (<https://twitter.com/aiwwenglish>). They tend to run a few days behind due to the challenges of human translation!

Go to one of these sites and read Ai Weiwei's tweets. You'll see that the tweets are marked by date and listed from most recent to oldest. You'll notice that he is tweeting still, but that perhaps what he tweets is being restricted. On the blog you might want to read the "Learn More" section to understand some of the terms being used or how they are being translated.

Choose five of his tweets that you think should be retweeted and copy them in the chart below. Write why you think they should be retweeted, or why you think others should "hear" these thoughts.

Ai Weiwei's tweet (in English)	Why it should be retweeted

⇒**TEACHERS!** It is up to you how you want students to get these tweets "retweeted." They might use their own twitter accounts to retweet. You might retweet them using a class account. You might make posters with these tweets to hang in the classroom as visual "retweets." Be creative!



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Thinking About Art: Ai Weiwei's "Tang Dynasty Pottery Vase with Coca-Cola Mark"

Common Core English Language Arts Standards: W9-10.2a-b; L9-10.1-3; W11-12.2a-b, L11-12.1-3

WI Model Academic Standards: Social Studies B12.7, Art and Design B12.1-12.5, G12.3, H12.6, I12.4-12.5, K12.1, L12.6-12.7

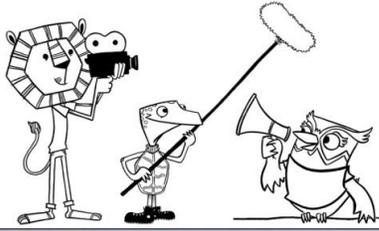
During the film, we see a reporter from *Der Spiegel*, a weekly German newsmagazine, interview Ai Weiwei during Ai's visit to Munich. The reporter asks Ai a number of yes/no questions about his 1995 artwork "Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn" (seen below):



Photo from Hirshhorn Gallery website (<http://www.hirshorn.si.edu>)

This interview results in a bit of comedy during the film, as Ai Weiwei explains that, yes, it is an authentic Han Dynasty urn (from 206 BCE – 220 CE); yes, he dropped it; yes, on purpose. We, the audience, are left to consider the implications of destroying an antique such as this one. We are told to care about objects from our past— so why would Ai Weiwei do this?

Over the years, Ai Weiwei has done a number of other art pieces that use ancient Chinese pottery. In a recent series, he painted vases and urns in bright colors using industrial paint. He also has a number of pieces that consist of a vase or urn (ancient, we are told in the titles of these pieces) painted with the Coca-Cola logo:



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"Tang Dynasty Pottery Vase with Coca-Cola Mark" (1997)
Photo: Larry Qualls; image from ARTstor.org
The Tang Dynasty dates from 618 to 907 CE.

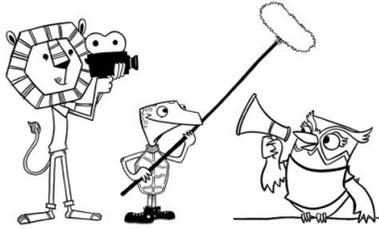
Spend some time looking at this photograph and answering the questions below. You might write a journal entry about your thoughts.

What do you notice about this vase? How do you respond to the piece?

How do you think people reacted to this piece in China? In the U.S.? Elsewhere? Why?

Why do you think Ai Weiwei painted this vase? How do you respond to his destruction of this antique?

Why did he use the Coca-Cola logo as a design?



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Thinking About History: Tiananmen Square

Common Core English Language Arts and Literacy Across Disciplines Standards:

RI9-10.2, RI9-10.7, RI9-10.9, W9-10.1a, W9-10.2a-f, L9-10.1-3, RH9-10.2, RH9-10.9, WHST9-10.2a-f, WHST9-10.4 | RI11-12.2, RI11-12.7, RI11-12.9, W11-12.1a, W11-12.2a-f, L11-12.1-3, RH11-12.2, RH11-12.9, WHST11-12.2a-f, WHST11-12.4

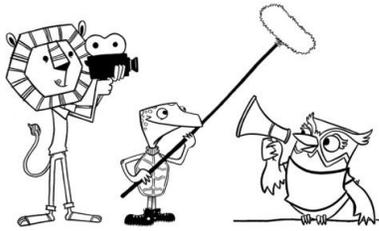
WI Model Academic Standards: *Social Studies B12.1, 12.2, 12.4, Art and Design H12.6*

Internationally, one of the most iconic moments in Chinese history may be the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989, a pro-democracy movement that ended in military suppression of the protestors. This suppression resulted in many civilian deaths. Although an exact death toll has never been released, estimates range from several hundred to thousands. Hence, the event is often known as the Tiananmen Square Massacre.

Ai Weiwei refers to this event in the movie, as well as other moments in China's history that demonstrate the government's intolerance of protest and resistance. On his blog, he recommended the work of journalist Robin Munro for those wanting to know more about these events. Read one of Munro's articles at <http://www.thenation.com/article/remembering-tiananmen-square>. As you read, take notes that will help you remember what Munro is saying as well as what you are thinking about these events.

The photo included in the article (below) is one of the most iconic images from the time. It shows an unidentified man (he is often referred to as "Tank Man" or the "Unknown Rebel," since his identity has never been determined) standing in front of a line of tanks. Non-violent in his protest, his actions are seen as symbolic of the resistance of the people. Ultimately his attempts to stop the tanks failed as he was pulled away by two uniformed men and the tanks continued on their way.





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After reading the article and looking at this picture, write a short essay (a few paragraphs) about how the Tiananmen Square Protests and Ai Weiwei's art help you understand Chinese history and politics. How do the Tiananmen Protests and similar events seem to have affected Ai's art? Why? How does his work (protesting after the Sichuan Earthquake, for example) continue the work done by these earlier protests? Be sure to refer to Munro's article, the photograph, and the film to explain why you say what you do about these moments in history.