

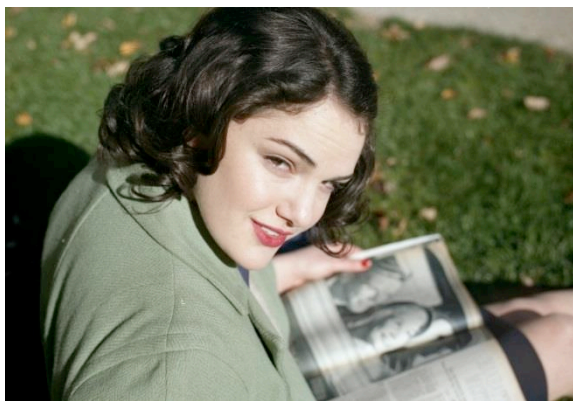


Education Events: Learning Resource

TEENAGE

Directed by Matt Wolf

USA 2013 | 78 min



The Filmmakers

Director	Matt Wolf
Writers	Jon Savage, Matt Wolf
Producers	Ben Howe, Kyle Martin
Original Music	Bradford Cox
Editor	Joe Beshenkovsky
Production Design	Inbal Weinberg
Costume Design	Tere Duncan
Archival Producers	Sierra Pettengill, Danielle Varga
Cast	Jena Malone (American Girl), Ben Whishaw (British Boy), Julia Hummer (German Girl), Jessie Usher (American Boy)

What was it like to be one of the first 'teenagers'? A 20th century invention born of wider changes in western society, it defined the space in between childhood and adulthood. Created using archive footage, contemporary writing, re-enactment and voiceover by actors including Ben Whishaw, this personal and sometimes dreamlike documentary suggests how it might have felt at the dawn of the modern age when engaged and motivated young people sought ways to play a more proactive part in their world. *Teenage* is based on the book by Jon Savage, *Teenage: the creation of Youth 1845-1945*.

Director Matt Wolf was born in 1982 in California, USA. Currently he lives in New York where he works as a writer and film maker. Matt's documentary *Teenage* is his second feature, following the award winning *Wild Combination: A portrait of Arthur Russell* (2008). He has been named one of the '25 New Faces of Independent Film' by Filmmaker Magazine and he is a 2010 Guggenheim Fellow, a grant awarded to those who have demonstrated exceptional capacity for productive scholarship or exceptional creative ability in the arts.

Before there were teenagers: some background

Until the mid-nineteenth century, for all but the very rich, as soon as you stopped being a child you went to work. Until 1833 when the first reforms emerged, child labour was widely acceptable across the world. There were many factors determining the fate of young people and in some countries these have not changed even now, one or all of poverty (families unable to survive without sending their children to work), cultural factors (labour seen to be a means to develop skills and build character) and gender (girls not expected to be educated or career driven). In 2013, almost every country has passed a law regulating and/or preventing child labour, from factory work to outright slavery.

The combination of improvements in life and work conditions along with legislation restricting child labour resulted in formation of a new 'second stage' of life, the teen-age. Young adults now faced new challenges, as they felt oppressed by their parents and addressed governments to be treated as equal with adults.

Matt Wolf on bringing the story of the birth of 'the teen-age' to life

"When I read Jon Savage's book Teenage, I was captivated by the intensity of his writing –biographies mixed with hidden histories about one of my obsessions: youth culture. Savage's Teenage isn't a chronicle of the familiar hippie, punk, or skater types that we all know. It is a fascinating pre-history of youth culture that tells the stories of Wandervogel, Boxcar Children, Jitterbugs, Victory Girls, and countless other forgotten youth movements from the early 20th century. Teenage is about an idea of youth, and that idea finding a form.

'Jon Savage writes about this history from a punk rock perspective. As a young journalist in 1970s London, he witnessed teenage punks buying thrift clothes from the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. They used safety pins to reassemble relics from previous youth cultures into something startling and new. He called this impulse "living collage" in his now legendary and definitive book on punk, England's Dreaming (2005). Though Teenage is about an earlier chapter of youth culture, Jon's writing is inspired by punk and I wanted my filmmaking to be too.

'Living collage became a kind of creative philosophy for the making of Teenage. We reassembled fragments of youth culture from the past to make a contemporary work of creative non-fiction. Archival newsreels, amateur movies, feature film clips, and photographs are collaged with newly filmed portraits of exceptional youth from history. These home movie-style scenes provide an emotional interpretation of the story.

'Jon and I chose to express ideas from the point of view of youth instead of explaining this cultural history. We composited quotes from hundreds of diaries and primary sources to create subjective narration that contrasts the authoritative voices of adults in newsreels and headlines. This narrative style mirrors the generational tension that drives the story, and I hope it helps viewers remember their own turbulent feelings of teenage rebellion.'

Suggested further viewing and reading:

Rose Hobart (Dir Joseph Cornell/USA 1936)

Joseph Cornell was an experimental filmmaker and artist. Rose Hobart is a 19min collage of East of Borneo (1936), a US adventure film. Cornell's edit, cut mainly from a 16mm print of the original film, focuses on the lead actress Rose Hobart and is one of the first and most famous American surrealist films.

By director Adam Curtis, documentary **I Felt Like a Kiss (UK 2009)** and TV mini documentary series **The Power of Nightmares: The Rise of the Politics of Fear (UK 2004)** and **The Century of the Self (UK 2002)**. All experimental films focusing on individuals and society, using archive footage and music with collage and other techniques

We Want Another World: Youth in Germany 1900 – 2010 (Fred Grimm, 2010)

The story of Germany's youth constructed with quotes and images.

Account Rendered: A Dossier on my Former Self (Melita Maschmann, 1963)

The story of a Hitler Youth leader in Germany, all 'Melita's' story in the film is from this memoir.

My First Life: A Biography (Brenda Dean Paul, 1935)

Brenda was one of the Bright Young People, an elite party movement in 1920s England.

Negro Youth at the Crossroads (E. Franklin Frazier, 1940)

Includes a long interview with Warren Wall, an account of being young and black in 1930's America.

Teenage official website, documenting the production of the film www.teenagefilm.com