ACTIVITY

Snowden (Movie)

INTRODUCTION TO COMPUTING

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PROGRAM&SECTION : BSIT-1F

Dilemma :



**REFLECTION**

Edward Snowden is much more than just a man. He's a highly controversial figure, as explored in the recently released film Snowden, which chronicles his life as a government intelligence whistleblower.

The film is both a political statement about mass surveillance and an entertaining look at the life of a man who shocked the world with a flash drive and countless gigabytes of data. Snowden stars Joseph Gordon-Levitt as Edward Snowden, a glasses-wearing, deep-voiced man. The actor plays a dramatic version of a whistleblower's life, a story about uncovering information that others want kept hidden. It's risky to leak classified intelligence documents, but it's also risky to make it entertaining on the big screen. Snowden director Oliver Stone had the difficult task of balancing truth with embellishment in order to keep the film from becoming boring. The scenes in which Snowden hid the leaked data in a Rubik's Cube and the NSA superiors spied on his personal life were dramatic fabrications, but artistic embellishment is important in the film industry.

A Hollywood blockbuster like this could be a more effective tool for spreading the word about mass surveillance than a previous documentary about Snowden's actions, Citizenfour — an award-winning film, but arguably not one that is widely consumed. Snowden engages its broad audience in the moral dilemmas of mass surveillance, the same discussions that Snowden has been having at universities, including Queen's, and press conferences for the past three years while seeking political asylum in Russia. The film focuses on a type of covert surveillance that affects everyone. It brings to life Snowden's desire to allow the public to debate the need for such surveillance programs democratically.

In expectation of the film's release, Snowden has been labeled a traitor in recent articles. The Washington Post called for Snowden's arrest, shocking many editorial boards around the world, after the paper itself reported on classified documents leaked by Snowden, earning them the Pulitzer Prize as a result. This is the first time in the history of the United States that an editorial board has called for the arrest of their own informant. Stone’s film has lead to a renewed global discussion of mass surveillance and the role of whistleblowers in democratic societies. Snowden’s status as a United States patriot has been called to question. However, whether you believe that he is a hero or a traitor — Snowden’s work has highlighted some hugely relevant contemporary issues. Snowden’s leaks, and the work of journalists and academics around the globe, have lead to a further push for government accountability. What the Snowden film does is bring the story of his important, yet shady, work to the public.