



## **Viewing guide for *Loose Change***

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Trinity University, December 2006



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# *Loose Change*- Pre-viewing Guide

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## 1. Overview/Introduction

The movie *Loose Change* (Rowe, 2005) is a documentary designed to expose “what really happened” on September 11, 2006. It is generally seen as controversial and has garnered much attention in the news media and online sources. Director and narrator Dylan Avery is the name most visibly associated with the project. Dylan Avery, Korey Rowe (producer), and Jason Bermans (producer and designer) are three undergraduate students who collaborated on the project. They consider themselves both the creators of the film and the founders of a movement. The main argument of *Loose Change* is the implication that sectors of the United States government had some degree of involvement in the attacks on the Twin Towers.



The documentary proceeds by analyzing a quantity of events that appear inconsistent to the filmmakers. Among the questions raised are the realities of the crash of United Airlines Flight 93, the collapse of the Twin Towers and World Trade Center 7 due to an internal demolition. Additionally, they examine whether the damage to the Pentagon building was caused by an airplane crash, as well as other alternative “real” explanations. In posing these arguments, the film is seen as part of a larger discourse often referred to as the “9/11 Truth Movement.” Though not the first of these September 11th conspiracy theories, it is the most popular representation of these claims.

This film is widely available online, has been translated into several languages, and, to date, entering the phrase “*Loose Change*” into a search engine yields around 12,000,000 hits. The original version was created in 2004. The content of the second edition does not differ greatly from the first in its message, though it is edited in a slightly different format. A “final cut” is anticipated in the near future, and according to Internet gossip it may reach local theaters. The film can be seen as an attempt to reconcile the feelings of citizens worldwide who still find themselves troubled by the events of 9/11. It offers people who see the film a direction from which to approach their concern about how the terrorist attacks were able to happen. *Loose Change* raises more questions than it answers, urging moviegoers to take a very active role in watching the documentary. It is a call to action by the filmmakers directed to the audience. Many viewers watch the documentary out of sheer curiosity, and to educate themselves about the event.

This viewing guide for the documentary *Loose Change* (Avery, 2005), was created by Jenny Stalder as part of “Communication 3325: Documentary Film” at Trinity University in Fall 2006.

## **2. Questions to keep in mind before watching the movie**

- How much credibility does Avery give his sources? Much of the film consists of quotes, pictures, interviews, film clips, and various websites, which may lack proper or sufficient credibility.
- Is director Dylan Avery convincing, persuasive, and professional as a narrator? His youthful voice may or may not lack authority and professionalism for the film.
- Are the possible conspiracy theories presented in *Loose Change* persuasive enough to stimulate personal research? Avery asks inspirational questions about the government's involvement in the 9/11 attacks, and argues several possible theories, which may motivate further investigation.

## **3. Where to obtain copies of this film**

- Can request a free film or can view on site at <http://www.loosechange911.com>
- <http://video.google.com>
- <http://www.question911.com>
- <http://www.youtube.com>

# ***Loose Change*- Post-viewing Guide**

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## **1. Overview**

This post-viewing guide is designed to aid the audience's critical appeal of the documentary film *Loose Change*. The post-viewing guide is aimed towards people who are interested by and desire to learn more about Dylan Avery's documentary, and gain better personal knowledge about the conspiracy theories which revolve around the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. The guide is also intended for those who may already have strong viewpoints on the documentary, and are looking to gain a deeper of knowledge on the subject matter. The useful resources provided are expected to be guides and insights into conspiracy theories proposed by the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Related sources are aimed to give a history behind the documentary film genre, techniques used today in producing documentaries, a guide for what separates documentaries from other genres of film, and to aid in writing about documentaries. There are several sites which link to movie and documentary glossary terms as well. The glossaries include several words and terms used by directors, in the post-production stage of making documentaries, and acting. This will aid people in learning how to speak and understand the language of film. The film reviews listed are written by various critics who state their opinions on conspiracy theories surrounding the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, and the documentary film *Loose Change*. They are intended to inspire, create discussion, and inform on the events of 9/11 and *Loose Change*. The scholarly treatments that are provided in this post-viewing guide are written by students who are enrolled in a documentary class at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. They effectively criticize various elements of *Loose Change*. Students' works include topics of conspiracy theories in *Loose Change*, manipulative qualities of mise-en-scene used in Dylan Avery's documentary about September 11<sup>th</sup>, and possible falsified information presented as fact in *Loose Change*. A video clip from the documentary is provided for readers of this guide as well. Accompanied with the clip are several discussion questions intended to spark debate and conversation about the possibility that the government created a series of explosions in the World Trade Centers on 9/11. A student at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, wrote this guide this guide for a documentary film class. There is also a brief biography of this student, as well as contact information at the end of this viewing guide. This post-viewing guide is meant to create conversation about the documentary film genre, director Dylan Avery's documentary *Loose Change*, and conspiracy theories, which have surfaced since September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

## **2. Useful resources**

### **a. Related resources about the attack on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001**

## 9/11 Conspiracy Theories

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9/11\\_conspiracy\\_theories](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9/11_conspiracy_theories))

Wikipedia offers an insight into various conspiracy theories, which have arisen since the attacks on 9/11. The sight includes an “official” account of September 11<sup>th</sup>, possible motives, what groups might have been behind the attacks, less common theories, and criticism of the theories.

**Debunking *Loose Change*** (<http://screwloosechange.blogspot.com/>)

ScrewLooseChange.com is a blog dedicated to those who want to expose *Loose Change* as lies and myths. The site includes clips from *Loose Change*, which debunk and refute Dylan Avery’s conspiracy theories.

**“A Campaign to Expose the Truth”** (<http://www.911truth.org/>)

9/11 Truth is a site similar to Screw *Loose Change* in that they both are dedicated to exposing supposed conspiracy theories, and educating about the “truth” of 9/11. This site provides various articles about 9/11, and what’s been going on in America politically since September 11<sup>th</sup>.

## b. Related resources about the documentary film genre

**Documentary Films** (<http://www.filmsite.org/docfilms.html>)

Filmsite.org is an award-winning website for movie fans. The site provides various synopses of various genres of film, including documentary. The documentary webpage provides an historical background of the documentary genre, including various subtopics of documentary like war, music, and depression.

### Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film

([http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=qtZ91DNvgBMC&oi=fnd&pg=PP11&sig=j-uHNtsU09SfU-6yvQGEpAhdHsk&dq=documentary+film+genre&prev=http://scholar.google.com/scholar%3Fq=documentary+film+genre%26hl=en%26lr=%26client=safari%26sa=N - PPP1,M1](http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=qtZ91DNvgBMC&oi=fnd&pg=PP11&sig=j-uHNtsU09SfU-6yvQGEpAhdHsk&dq=documentary+film+genre&prev=http://scholar.google.com/scholar%3Fq=documentary+film+genre%26hl=en%26lr=%26client=safari%26sa=N-PPP1,M1))

This book by Erick Barnouw is about the history of documentary film from 1895 to now, dating back to Louis Lumiere. This modern book also covers the modern technology used in filmmaking today.

### Introduction to Documentary

(<http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=E5bj1XDvRxUC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&sig=SrWN3QbuCzTQTXZx9wADlni5Cxs&dq=introduction+to+documentary&prev=http://scholar.google.com/scholar%3Fq=introduction+to+documentary%26hl=en%26lr=%26sa=G>)

This book by Bill Nichols was used in our Documentary class, and covers several topics included the history of documentaries, ethical issues surrounding documentary filmmaking, what makes documentaries different from other film genres, and how to write about documentaries. This book is an excellent writing tool for documentary as a genre and contains writing comparisons of documentary so students can write more fluently on the genre.

### **c. Glossaries of useful film terms**

#### **Film term glossary**

[http://homepage.newschool.edu/~schlejoj/film\\_courses/glossary\\_of\\_film\\_terms/glossary.html](http://homepage.newschool.edu/~schlejoj/film_courses/glossary_of_film_terms/glossary.html)

This website includes a large list of film terms from A through Z. The list of terms is designed to aid students and individuals to gain a better knowledge of how to “speak film” and comprehend the language of film.

#### **Movie terminology**

[http://www.bravotv.com/Project\\_Greenlight/Movie\\_Terms/index.shtml](http://www.bravotv.com/Project_Greenlight/Movie_Terms/index.shtml)

This Bravotv.com source gives a shorter list of movie terms for viewers. Students will gain a better knowledge of film terms used in writing, on set, production, such as “ambient noise,” “rough cuts,” and “two shot.”

#### **Internet Movie Database (<http://imdb.com/Glossary/>)**

This site, IMDB.com, provides a wide-range of terms used in film, acting, directing, and movie going. IMDB is open to feedback, corrections, and additions to their site with the glossary editor. Terms include “mise-en-scene,” “macguffin” (a term used by Alfred Hitchcock), and “vertigo effect.”

### **d. Film reviews**

#### **Rewriting 9/11**

[http://web.lexisnexis.com/universe/document?\\_m=4d2b1c05b2418b83d013bf875032c124&\\_docnum=2&wchp=dGLzVlz-zSkVA&\\_md5=23db813fce798a80110b9097c07bee29](http://web.lexisnexis.com/universe/document?_m=4d2b1c05b2418b83d013bf875032c124&_docnum=2&wchp=dGLzVlz-zSkVA&_md5=23db813fce798a80110b9097c07bee29)

This review by Jonathan Curiel from the San Francisco Chronicle reviews Loose Change and the conspiracy theories surrounding the film. The article also looks into the conspiracy theorist, and their distrustful views of the government.

#### **Why conspiracy theories from September 11<sup>th</sup> still arise**

<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=43&hid=119&sid=f9ca35ba-4718-4fa7-b431-3ecb34ec8572%40sessionmgr104>

This article by Lev Grossman from Time magazine reviews the conspiracy theories that have arisen since September 11th, including the online documentary film *Loose Change*, and theories, which Dylan Avery has suggested.

**“Click here for conspiracy”**

[http://web.lexisnexis.com/universe/document?\\_m=0c0ff1fa02505255a9fcd22fd80006b6&\\_docnum=1&wchp=dGLzVlzzSkVA&\\_md5=edc881862b9f5be083967ec45f8a3174](http://web.lexisnexis.com/universe/document?_m=0c0ff1fa02505255a9fcd22fd80006b6&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLzVlzzSkVA&_md5=edc881862b9f5be083967ec45f8a3174))

Vanity Fair’s Nancy Jo Sales reviews *Loose Change* and the director’s theories of September 11<sup>th</sup>. She also discusses the documentary’s recent success online, and media outlets such as CBS and CNN’s news reports taken out of context in the film.

#### **e. Scholarly treatments of the film**

<http://www.trinity.edu/adelwich/documentary/guides.html>

**Jenny Stalder’s “Conspiracy Theories in *Loose Change*”**

<http://www.trinity.edu/adelwich/documentary/j.stalder.2006.loose.change.pdf>)

This paper reviews and criticizes the documentary film, *Loose Change*, and Dylan Avery’s poor arguments, unreliable sources, credibility, editing techniques, and narration. It serves as a guide to those interested in what Avery could have done better to produce a more effective and credible documentary on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Nick Nobel’s “Louder than words”**

<http://www.trinity.edu/adelwich/documentary/n.nobel.2006.loose.change.pdf>)

This Trinity University student, Nick Nobel, reviews and criticizes mise-en-scene and its manipulative qualities in *Loose Change*. Nobel analyzes lighting, space, color, and other elements of mise-en-scene in Avery’s documentary.

**Alexandra Sedeno’s “The Blasphemy of *Loose Change*”**

<http://www.trinity.edu/adelwich/documentary/a.sedeno.2006.loose.change.pdf>)

Sedeno looks at the flaws of the documentary film, and director Dylan Avery’s invention of words and versions of what occurred during the tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. She also reviews Avery’s invented information about 9/11.

### **3. Video-clip analysis**

#### **a. Explanation and set-up**

The provided clip looks into a scene from the documentary *Loose Change* by Dylan Avery, and supposed explosions in the Twin Towers in New York City. The clip



presented is designed for viewers to be able to analyze, from their own perspective, if the explosions were created by the government, or from the collapse of the World Trade Centers themselves. The clip is located on YouTube.com, and is available to all who wish to view it.

**b. Link to the video clip**



**c. Analysis**

The video clip presented on YouTube.com, which suggests the explosions in the World Trade Centers in New York City were planned and orchestrated by the government, lacks believability. One image includes a clip that suggests something was pushed out of one of the windows in one of the Twin Towers. Yes, one could suggest the government had pushed evidence out of the building, but it is more likely it was a person who fell out of the window to an untimely death. Most scenes in this clip are unclear and grainy, which make it difficult to make out possible explosions. Many explosions could have occurred during the impact of the plane and the fall of the Towers themselves. Avery makes no assumptions as to what the object, which fell off the building might have been, and does not suggest a reason for why the tripod shook twelve seconds before the building collapsed was due to the explosions themselves. Avery's clips, which zoom in on the supposed explosions, are not only difficult to view and make out, but look unprofessional as well. By tinting the clips blue and boxing in the explosions in black and white, viewers have a distasteful and a visually unpleasing experience of the theoretical explosions. Narration is also a problem in this individual clip. Avery's narration includes slang like, "Do ya still believe," and his use of the word, "Here" for explaining where the explosions occurred is too frequent. Some may find the clip to be persuasive and convincing enough to uphold Dylan Avery's theory that the government had something to do with the World Trade Centers collapsing. Avery does put the series of clips of supposed explosions together well. The clip is fluid throughout the many sources of clips in which he has included in this particular scene from the documentary, but overall, the clip is not aesthetically pleasing, convincing, or put together well.

#### 4. Discussion questions

- The various film reviews included in this guide are primarily against *Loose Change* and its ability to correctly persuade the audience and Avery's lack of believability with his theories about September 11<sup>th</sup>. Do you agree or disagree with the critics, or do you believe Avery put the documentary together in a way that effectively persuades the audience?
- Do you believe the Trinity student's scholarly treatments of *Loose Change* are effective tools in criticizing and discussing various elements of the documentary?
- Do you believe Dylan Avery was effective in convincing, persuasive, and professional as a narrator? Did his voice hold authority and professionalism during the documentary?
- In the video clip, were Avery's editing techniques pleasing to the eye, believable? If not, what are some techniques you would have added or subtracted from this scene to make it better?

#### 5. Closing thoughts

This guide will hopefully be an effective tool for those who wish to learn more about Dylan Avery's documentary *Loose Change*. The viewing guide is constructed to help others learn more about the documentary as a whole, and question the film themselves in becoming better film critics. All links and treatments provided are meant to aid in one's knowledge not only about *Loose Change*, but also about documentary films as a genre in the film.

#### 6. About the author of this guide

##### a. Short biography

Jenny Stalder is an undergraduate student at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. She is a Communications major and Communications Management minor. Jenny is from Kansas City, Missouri and has had previous writing experience with The Kansas City Star Newspaper, and has written several film reviews and various articles. This is Jenny's first viewing guide, and is for her Documentary Film Class.

##### b. Contact Information

Email: [jstalder@trinity.edu](mailto:jstalder@trinity.edu)

**c. A note to teachers, students, and anyone who uses this material in a group setting**

This pre-viewing and post-viewing guide is intended for extended help, information, and insight for whoever should use it. This guide is based on a personal opinion of *Loose Change*, and is aimed for support of documentary film and for *Loose Change*.