

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# Football Hooliganism

By CommonLit Staff  
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*Violent acts and delinquent behavior have long been associated with football (or, as Americans know it, "soccer") games. The need to feel accepted by a group and to gain power are the main reasons people partake in what is known as football hooliganism. As you read, take notes on what factors contribute to football hooliganism, and any other clues that answer the question, "what are the effects of following the crowd?"*

## Background

- [1] Football hooliganism refers to unruly, violent, and destructive behavior by overzealous<sup>1</sup> supporters of soccer clubs. Behaviors include brawling, vandalism, and intimidation. Football hooliganism normally involves conflict between gangs formed for the specific purpose of intimidating and physically attacking supporters of other teams.

Conflict may take place before, during or after matches. Participants often select locations away from the stadium to avoid arrest by the police, but conflict can also occur spontaneously inside the stadium or in the surrounding streets. In such cases, shop windows may be smashed, and police cars may be overturned. In some cases, hooligans, police, and bystanders have been killed, and riot police have intervened with tear gas, police dogs, armored vehicles and water cannons.



*"Supporters of PSV Eindhoven in Lille" by Liondarto is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.*

## History of Hooliganism

While hooliganism can be traced back to the 14th century, the first modern instance occurred during the 1880s in England. Gangs of supporters would intimidate neighborhoods and attack referees, opposing supporters, and players. By the 1960s, an average of 25 hooligan incidents were being reported each year in England. The label "football hooliganism" first began to appear in the English media around that time.

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1. **Overzealous** (*adjective*) extremely passionate or enthusiastic in support of a person, object, or cause

## Causes and Effects

Football hooliganism has factors in common with juvenile delinquency,<sup>2</sup> and involvement is often the result of a person's need for group identity, interaction with like-minded people, feelings of legitimacy,<sup>3</sup> and a desire for power. In many countries, football hooliganism is also associated with racism, and abuse of non-white players is common.

- [5] Several countries have taken measures to prevent hooliganism by banning weapons inside the stadiums, separating fans of opposing teams, and sometimes not allowing any fans to witness specific games at all. Although most recent incidents are less violent than in the past, hooliganism continues to be an issue despite these measures. Recent seasons have seen an increase in hooliganism incidents, including gun attacks and intense verbal abuse and shaming. In December 2010, 14 people were injured when missiles were thrown onto the field and rocket flares were set off in the stands; two years later, a goalkeeper was attacked by a fan who had previously been banned from every soccer stadium in the UK. Thousands of fans, players, and referees have been injured or killed because of hooliganism, either at the hands of opposing hooligans, police attempting to control crowds, or other fans stampeding.

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2. **Delinquency** (*noun*) wrongful, illegal, or antisocial behavior  
3. validation or acceptance

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following best states the central idea of the text?
  - A. Football matches should be avoided, as they are often violent, unruly events.
  - B. Football hooliganism is a serious threat to the safety of Europeans, and must be contained.
  - C. Football hooliganism is the dangerous result of group mentality and a desire to feel powerful.
  - D. Football hooliganism is the result of an overly racist populace of fans.
  
2. PART A: In Paragraph 4, what is meant by the term “group identity”?
  - A. The designated leader of a group of people
  - B. The commonalities shared by a group of people
  - C. The way other people perceive a certain group of people
  - D. The expressed purpose/goal of a group of people
  
3. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer for Part A?
  - A. “...overzealous supporters of soccer clubs.” (Paragraph 1)
  - B. “...intimidate neighborhoods and attack referees, opposing supporters and players.” (Paragraph 3)
  - C. “...interaction with like-minded people...” (Paragraph 4)
  - D. “...at the hands of opposing hooligans...” (Paragraph 5)
  
4. Which TWO statements best describe the relationship between football hooliganism and juvenile delinquency?
  - A. Football hooliganism and juvenile delinquency both involve illegal, sometimes very dangerous, actions.
  - B. Football hooliganism is a less extreme version of juvenile delinquency.
  - C. Both football hooliganism and juvenile delinquency require individuals to be rehabilitated.
  - D. Football hooliganism and juvenile delinquency are both often the consequences of individuals searching for group identity.
  - E. Juvenile delinquency is illegal; football hooliganism is not.
  - F. Football hooliganism and juvenile delinquency are both often the consequences of individuals leaving their groups in favor of individualism.

5. How does the need to belong contribute to a culture of football hooliganism?

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## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. Why do you think so many soccer games get out of control? Explain your answer.
  
2. How can we prevent football hooliganism?
  
3. What penalties do you think there should be for hooliganism at sporting events?
  
4. Is there a similar term for football hooliganism where you are from? What are the similarities or differences if so?
  
5. What are some of the difficulties of controlling/punishing a crowd?
  
6. What are some other examples of crowds getting out of control? Use evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.