TED TALK

HOW MOVIES TEACH MANHOOD

BY COLIN STOKES

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION
INSTRUCTIONS

Individually or as a group, watch the TED Talk “How Movies Teach Manhood” by Colin Stokes (available at leaning.org/education/movies-manhood). Use the questions below for a group discussion on the themes and ideas presented in the video.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Colin discusses the “Bechdel Test” in this TED Talk. The Bechdel Test is a fast and simple way to assess gender roles in movies. It consists of three questions that can be applied to any movie:

1. Does the movie have at least two female characters?
2. Do the female characters talk to each other?
3. Do they talk about something other than a boy or a man?

As a group, pick a recent movie to run through the test. Are you surprised by the results? Can you think of two recent movies that pass the test?

The entertainment industry has made vast improvements in its portrayal of strong female characters over the years. What movies did you watch as a kid that definitely DID NOT pass the Bechdel Test? How did they affect the way you felt or thought? What movies did pass the test, and how did those impact you?

Colin talks about his son’s identification with Luke Skywalker. As a kid, did you have TV or film characters that you looked up to? Which characters and why?

Who are your top two favorite female TV or movie characters now? Why? What about male characters?

Colin feels that many popular movies teach us that the male hero’s job “is to defeat the villain with violence and then collect the reward.” In what ways do you think this is harmful to boys and girls? How can we counter this message?

Do you agree with Colin’s claim that men are responsible for showing new definitions of manhood to boys? Why or why not? What can women do to support new models of manhood?
If you have children in your life, think about their favorite movies and TV shows. Who are their favorite characters? How do you feel about them? Are they setting positive examples of gender roles? Why or why not?

According to Colin, it’s the job of adults to find movies that pass the Bechdel Test to show to kids. “Seek out the heroines who are there,” he says, “who show real courage, who bring people together, and to nudge our sons to identify with those heroines and to say, ‘I want to be on their team.’” As a group, share the movies you’ve watched that pass the Bechdel Test. Of these movies, which ones would you want to watch with the kids in your life?

- To get more entertainment ideas, take a look at our lists of fun and family-friendly TV, movie, and book recommendations.¹ We teamed up with Common Sense Media to create this great resource for your next family movie night or story time!

**TAKE THIS TOPIC HOME!**

For a fun way to turn any family movie night into an open discussion on gender roles in society and media, check out our activity *Movie Night: You Be the Critic!*² You’ll find step-by-step instructions for watching a movie with kids aged 6 and up, including sample talking points and two handouts kids can use to question gender stereotypes while they watch.

¹Get the list at www.commonsensemedia.org/lean-in-together.
²Download the activity at https://s3.amazonaws.com/leanin-men/together/movie-night.pdf