

talking with children about films

by Mary Jo Zwar

© Produced for *The Lutheran* and the Uniting Church's Resource Centre for Youth and Family Ministry, South Australia

WHY DISCUSS FILMS WITH CHILDREN?

A film (like a book, TV show or commercial, website, computer game, magazine, billboard, song, newspaper, junk mail ...) can provide a starting point for vital 'caring conversation' between children and the grownups who care for them. The conversation can


- help you share experiences with your children and develop your relationship
- show your children you care about them
- help you understand what your children think and feel about real life, as well as 'reel life'
- help you guide their understanding of real life and 'reel life'
- allow you to deal with misconceptions or fears they may have from watching the film — before they become problems in real life
- help your children to clarify and express their thoughts and feelings
- help them become discerning media consumers
- help you get your money's worth out of the cinema experience by extending its impact.

GENERAL DISCUSSION POINTS

If you have seen a film together, you can share your responses. If the child has seen a film without you, your discussion will centre on the child's responses only and help you to share their experience. The idea is that the child's responses to the basic questions will help you lead the discussion in a direction that will be helpful for him/her.

- What was the movie about?
- Did you like the movie? What did you like about it? What didn't you like about it?
- What part/s of the movie made you feel good? What part/s made you feel bad? Let's draw a picture of that part. Or, let's act out that part.
- Which character in the movie is most like you? How are they like you?
- Which characters remind you of people you know? How are they like these people?
- What happened in the movie that is like something that has happened to you?
- Do you think the movie was about something that really happened or a made-up story? Why?
- Which character would you most like to have for a friend? Why?
- What problems did the characters have to deal with? How did they deal with the problems?
- What mistakes did they make? Do you think they could have done something differently/better? How might that have changed the story?
- What happened in the movie that you knew was going to happen before it happened? What happened that surprised you?
- What do you want to remember from the movie? Do you think this is what the film-maker wanted you to remember?

You may also want to get into some film technique questions; for example, were the characters played by live actors or animated drawings? How could you tell? How did the music help you feel what the film-maker wanted you to feel? What were the slowest parts/fastest parts? Why do you think they were slow/fast? What were the loudest/quietest parts? Why do you think they were loud/quiet?



A resource for
parents and
people in
ministry with
children