



TAKE-HOME ACTIVITY
Recommended for kids ages 6 & up

MOVIE NIGHT: YOU BE THE CRITIC!

#LeanInTogether

Inspired by the popular TED Talk by Colin Stokes, “How Movies Teach Manhood,” this activity helps turn any family movie night into an open discussion on gender roles in media and beyond.

In part 1 of this activity, you’ll watch a movie with your family, then discuss how it portrays male and female characters. In part 2, we recommend you keep a running list of characters you like — and why — on the family fridge.

GOALS FOR THE FAMILY

- Learn to think critically about how gender is portrayed in media
- Use media to shape ongoing discussions on the roles of women and men

MATERIALS

- Step-by-step instructions
- Sample talking points (but feel free to use your own words!)
- Two activity handouts

ESTIMATED TIME

- 5-10 minutes to pick the movie
- 20-25 minutes for post-movie discussion

Visit leanintgether.org/resources for additional tips and resources to help parents raise kids who aren’t held back by gender stereotypes.

PART 1

MOVIE NIGHT

INTRODUCTION

Most kids watch hours of movies and TV a day, yet we know the media doesn't always send the right messages to our children. Female characters are often underrepresented and stereotyped. According to the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, male characters outnumber female characters by almost three to one in family films—a ratio that hasn't changed since the end of World War II!—and female characters are more likely to be objectified for their looks and less likely to have jobs. As Colin Stokes explores in his TED Talk, **How Movies Teach Manhood**, the depiction of male characters is no less problematic. According to Colin, many movies tell boys “that a male hero’s job is to defeat the villain with violence and then collect the reward.”

If we teach our kids to think carefully about what they watch, they’ll learn how to enjoy movies and TV shows while recognizing the stereotypes they depict—and to seek out stories that break the mold.

Step 1

PICK A MOVIE

ESTIMATED TIME: 5-10 minutes

Most movies will work for this activity: animated or live action, comedy or drama, silly or sophisticated. Just remember, your family's discussion will be shaped by the movie you select, so think carefully about the conversation you want to have.

You can also repeat the activity with different movies—or even try TV shows and other media.

WE RECOMMEND TWO LISTS OF MOVIES TO GET YOU STARTED:

- At bechdeltest.com, you'll find a publicly curated list of movies run through what's called the Bechdel test. Movies that pass the Bechdel test depict (1) at least two named women (2) who talk to each other (3) about something besides a man. Using simple iconography, you can quickly see how popular movies stack up.
- Common Sense Media also curated lists of [#LeanInTogether](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/lean-in-together) TV shows, movies, and books that are good for boys and girls. Visit [commonsensemedia.org/lean-in-together](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/lean-in-together) for recommendations and reviews.

A smaller percentage of films released in 2014 passed the Bechdel test than the films released in the previous 3 years.

QUICK TIP

If you choose a movie you've already seen, it will be easier to get everyone to focus on the activity.

Step 2

WATCH THE MOVIE TOGETHER & KEEP TRACK OF WHAT YOU OBSERVE

ESTIMATED TIME: Depends on the movie

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

Print out the attached “Movie Night” handout for your family. You’ll each need a copy and a pen.

Gather your family on the couch and hit play (popcorn optional). While you watch, use the handout to keep track of how often male and female characters do the following:

- Speak (even a single word!)
- Speak to a character of the same gender
- Talk about love or relationships
- Take the lead in a group
- Dress in fancy or revealing clothing
- Act aggressively or violently

You can also choose your own actions to track.

QUICK TIP

If you have little ones, make sure to team up with them. Just give them space to reach their own conclusions. They’ll learn a lot and so will you!



Step 3

TALK ABOUT THE MOVIE AS A FAMILY

ESTIMATED TIME: 20-25 minutes

Once you've finished, use the character grid on the handout to analyze the three main male and female characters in the movie, then talk about the different characters and the story as a family.

Take a few minutes and go through everyone's answers on the grid. In addition, you can use these questions, or your own, to drive the discussion:

“ Did this movie make you proud to be a boy/girl? Why or why not? ”

- Who was your favorite character in the movie? Why did you like him/her? What did you learn from him/her?
- Who is the hero of the story? What makes him/her a hero?
- How are the male and female characters portrayed differently?
- Do you think the movie's portrayal of men and women (boys and girls) is accurate? Why or why not?
- *(If this is everyone's second time watching the movie)* Do you feel differently about the movie now than you did the first time you watched it? In what way(s)?

PART 2

KEEP TRACK OF YOUR FAMILY'S FAVORITE CHARACTERS

ESTIMATED TIME: Ongoing

Put copies of the attached “Characters I Love” chart on the fridge so each member of your family can keep a running list of their favorite characters—and why they like them.

Then find time to discuss everyone’s list. You can use these questions as a starting point or ask your own:

“ Do the characters you like share common traits? ”

- Do the males and females in your house like different characters?
- Are most of the popular characters male or female? Any reasons why?
- What are you learning about media? Is it changing the way you watch movies and TV?

Gender imbalance begins behind the camera: Only 13% of directors, 25% of writers, and 23% of executive producers are women.

QUICK TIP

In the top 100 U.S. films of 2013, only 15% of protagonists were women.

#LeanInTogether with Us

Share your #LeanInTogether Moments by celebrating female leaders, dads who are all in at work and at home, and diverse teams achieving great things. We'll feature our top picks on leanintogether.org!



About #LeanInTogether



#LeanInTogether is a public awareness campaign focused on men and their important role in reaching gender equality. Brought to you by LeanIn.Org in partnership with the NBA and WNBA, #LeanInTogether emphasizes how men benefit from supporting women at home and at work—happier marriages, more successful children, and better team outcomes—and provides practical information on how men can do their part.

leanintogether.org

Special thanks to Colin Stokes, whose TED Talk helped inspire this activity.

colinstokes.blogspot.com

MOVIE NIGHT: YOU BE THE CRITIC!

<p>While you watch the movie, tally how many times male and female characters do the following:</p>		
<p>Speak (even a single word!)</p>		
<p>Speak to a character of the same gender</p>		
<p>Talk about love or relationships</p>		
<p>Take the lead in a group</p>		
<p>Dress in fancy or revealing clothing</p>		
<p>Act aggressively or violently</p>		
<p>Add your own:</p>		
<p>Add your own:</p>		

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Now reflect on the three main male characters and answer these questions individually or as a group:

Name of character	What does he talk about in the movie? What subjects are important to him?	What does he do in the movie? And/or what does he most want to accomplish?	How would you describe him (e.g., caring, smart, powerful, interesting)?

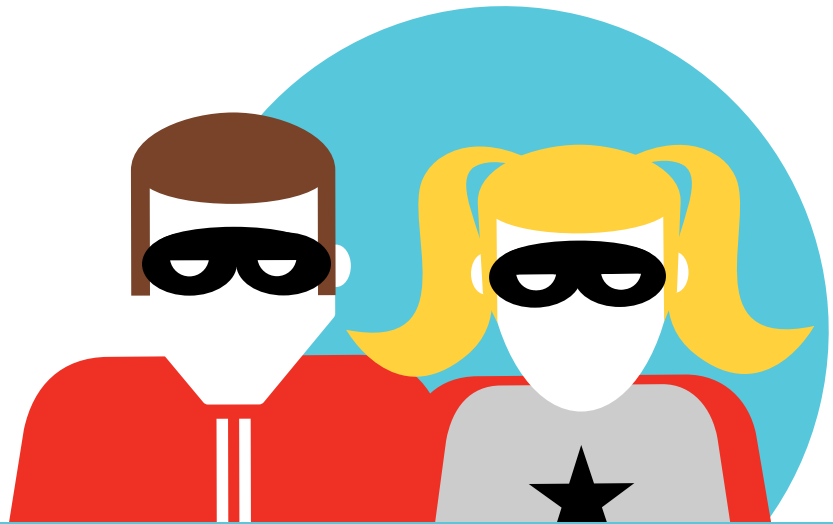
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Now reflect on the three main female characters and answer these questions individually or as a group:

Name of character	What does she talk about in the movie? What subjects are important to her?	What does she do in the movie? And/or what does she most want to accomplish?	How would you describe her (e.g., caring, smart, powerful, interesting)?

CHARACTERS I LOVE...



My name is:

My favorite character is: _____

From the movie/show: _____

I like this character because: _____

My favorite character is: _____

From the movie/show: _____

I like this character because: _____

My favorite character is: _____

From the movie/show: _____

I like this character because: _____