

# Teaching with Movies

## Copyright Overview

### Before You Teach, Know Your Rights

- Copyright law protects the commercial and financial interests of studios, distributors, creators, and all those who have invested their resources into the production and distribution of video content.
- As educators working in non-profit educational institutions (or governmental agencies), we are protected when we show movies in our classrooms in a manner that meets the spirit of “**fair use**” and the instance of “**face-to-face instruction**” :

#### Fair Use

1. Is the material being used for commercial or for nonprofit educational purposes?
  - It must be non-commercial.
  - It must be educational.
2. Is the material merely factual or a work of talent and imagination? Outdated or still available?
3. What proportion of the material is being copied?
  - Warning - There is no clear distinction between what amount is acceptable and what is not.
  - Snippets can be reproduced, or an entire film may be shown, but other materials that are supplemental for the lesson (worksheets, texts, etc.) are subject to other laws of copyright.
4. What is the effect on the potential market value of the material?
  - Basically, your showing the movie should not undermine the owner’s ability to profit from their work.
  - Other rules apply to materials (print, audio, web, etc.) or movies you want students to watch or use outside of the classroom.

All four of the above criteria are considered by courts when determining if the unauthorized use of a copyrighted work can be considered “fair.”

(For more information, <http://www.copyrightfoundation.org/files/userfiles/file/EducatorsGuide.pdf> )

#### Face-to-Face Instruction

Face-to-face instruction simply means:

- the audience is limited to your students;
- the venue is limited to an instructor-supervised classroom;
- the film is being used as part of a mediated, instructional activity.

#### Public Performance

Any rebroadcast, or showing of a film that does not meet the above criteria, may be considered a public performance and thereby falls under different copyright provisions which require the purchase of a public performance license.

- Example: *Your school decides to show **The Hobbit** as part of a **Lord of the Rings** festival. Students, parents, and teachers are invited to watch the film. An admission fee is not charged,*

*but concessions are sold as part of a fundraiser for the school.* Regardless of profits or donations made, this is still a public performance and requires a public performance license.

- Example: *The local prison routinely rents movies and plays them on a closed-circuit rebroadcast within the prison.* This is public performance and therefore requires a public performance license.

### **Disclaimer!**

This is an overview and is not intended to fully represent every instance of copyright law as it pertains to movies or instructional materials. Below are some great resources for more information:

## **More Copyright Resources**

### **Motion Picture Association of America**

<http://www.mpaa.org/contentprotection/public-performance-law>

#### **The Law**

The Federal Copyright Act (Title 17 of the U.S. Code) governs how copyrighted materials, such as movies, may be used. Neither the rental nor the purchase of a copy of a copyrighted work carries with it the right to publicly exhibit the work. No additional license is required to privately view a movie or other copyrighted work with a few friends and family or in certain narrowly defined face-to-face teaching activities. However, bars, restaurants, private clubs, prisons, lodges, factories, summer camps, public libraries, daycare facilities, parks and recreation departments, churches and non-classroom use at schools and universities are all examples of situations where a public performance license must be obtained. This legal requirement applies regardless of whether an admission fee is charged, whether the institution or organization is commercial or non-profit, or whether a federal or state agency is involved.

### **What Is Copyright**

<http://www.whatiscopyright.org/>

Copyright is a protection that covers published and unpublished literary, scientific and artistic works, whatever the form of expression, provided such works are fixed in a tangible or material form. This means that if you can see it, hear it and/or touch it - it may be protected. If it is an essay, if it is a play, if it is a song, if it is a funky original dance move, if it is a photograph, HTML coding or a computer graphic that can be set on paper, recorded on tape or saved to a hard drive, it may be protected. Copyright laws grant the creator the exclusive right to reproduce, prepare derivative works, distribute, perform and display the work publicly. Exclusive means only the creator of such work, not anybody who has access to it and decides to grab it.

### **Resources for Educators – Copyright Alliance Education Foundation**

<http://www.copyrightfoundation.org/>

### **Face-to-Face Instruction**

<http://madisoncollege.edu/in/teach-act-checklist-classroom>

### **Copyright Law as it Relates to the Use of Movies in the Classroom**

<http://www.teachwithmovies.org/copyright.html>

**An Overview of Copyright from Swank Licensing**

<http://www.movlic.com/library/copyright.html>

## **Public Performance License Vendors and Info**

See the companies listed below to inquire about purchasing a public performance license.

Criterion Pictures

[www.criterionpicusa.com](http://www.criterionpicusa.com)

(800) 890-9494

Motion Picture Licensing Corporation

[www.mplc.com](http://www.mplc.com)

(800) 462-8855

Swank Motion Pictures, Inc.

[www.swank.com](http://www.swank.com)

(800) 876-5577

## **Where to Get Legal Copies of Movies**

- Rentals (Netflix, Redbox, etc.)
- Local Library
- Purchased copies

# Teaching Resources

## Ratings, Reviews and Plot Summaries

Although many sites, such as Netflix, Amazon, Redbox, Rotten Tomatoes, and others offer user reviews and movie commentary (liked it or didn't like it kinds of reviews), the following sites provide a different level of ratings insight regarding age-appropriateness, objectionable content, and other factors that can be important when selecting film for your classroom. In addition to the sites listed below, there are many faith-based organizations that also provide movie ratings.

### Common Sense Media

<http://www.commonsensemedia.org/movie-reviews>

### Kids In Mind

<http://www.kids-in-mind.com/>

### The Classification and Rating Administration (CARA)

<http://www.filmratings.com>

### Parent Previews

<http://parentpreviews.com/>

### Internet Movie Database

<http://www.imdb.com>

### Wikipedia - usually a great resource for in-depth plot summaries and other details

<http://www.wikipedia.org>

## Lesson Plans, Discussion Guides, etc.

While you can often locate movie-specific discussion guides, lesson plans, worksheets, etc. by simply searching online for such items (ex. keyword search by film title + "discussion guide" or "lesson"), the following sites provide an extraordinarily high level of quality content and accessibility.

Please note many films have their own web sites and sometimes additional materials for teaching. Also, discussion guides and lesson plans can also be found on the web via many faith-based film organizations, film commissions around the globe, and academic institutions. Independent films are often an excellent source for thought-provoking content and imagery.

### Teach with Movies

URL: [www.teachwithmovies.org](http://www.teachwithmovies.org)

Fees: \$11.99 / year subscription for full access to learning guides

Description:

*Site provides worksheets and learning guides for movies searchable by content area, age group, and alpha order by movie title. Some of the curriculum is aligned to the 2010 Common Core Standards.*

**UK Film Education Organization**

URL: [www.filmeducation.org](http://www.filmeducation.org)

Fees: FREE

Description:

*Although this is an organization based in the United Kingdom, and supported by charitable donations from the UK Film Industry, the movies are the same as many films shown in the United States. Resources can be accessed via an alpha list (by movie title) as well as by content areas. Discussion guides are extensive and well-designed.*

**Plugged In / Focus on the Family**

URL: [www.pluggedin.com](http://www.pluggedin.com)

Fees: FREE

Description:

*This is a Christian, faith-based site that offers discussion guides for a small selection of films. They also provide commentary and plot synopses of new releases that include reviews of spiritual, sexual, violent, or other forms of content that may be objectionable for some viewers.*

**Point of View / PBS Documentaries**

URL: [www.pbs.org/pov/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/)

Fees: FREE to registered users

Description:

*A rich resource of documentary and independent film that cover arts & culture, criminal justice, environment & nature, ethnicity & gender, family & society, health/healthcare, immigration, international, social and political concerns. Their site provides some streamed video content, as well as broadcast schedules, and educational resources for many of the films. From the site:*

POV offers free resources for educators, including 200+ online film clips connected to 100+ standards-aligned lesson plans, discussion guides and reading lists. Registered educators can use any of 80+ full-length films in the classroom for free through our [documentary lending library](#).

**ESL Mania - Using Movies to Teach ESL**

URL: [http://www.eslmania.com/teacher/esl\\_teacher\\_talk/Using\\_movies.htm](http://www.eslmania.com/teacher/esl_teacher_talk/Using_movies.htm)

Fees: FREE

Description:

*This is a solid overview of ways movies can enhance ESL instruction, including an extensive list of films useful for language study and acquisition.*