



LESSON PLAN

Level: Grades 9 to 12

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Violence on Film: The Ratings Game

Overview

To introduce students to the rating systems for films, videos and television and to the issues that surround these classifications.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- knowledge of the history of film classification in Canada.
- knowledge of the film classification categories in their own province.
- an understanding of the differences between film, video and television classifications.
- an understanding of the issues surrounding film, video and television classification.

Preparation and Materials

Prepare the following transparencies:

- Your own province's rating classification system chosen from the Motion Picture Association - Canada website (<http://www.cmpda.ca/?q=content/film-classification-boards>)
- *Video Rating Systems: A Comparison*
- *Canadian Television Classifications*

And the following handouts:

- *Rating the Movies*
- *Torture Films and How Kids Get To See Them*
- *TV Violence Warnings Lure Teens*



Procedure

Part One: Film classification

Ask your students:

- Why do we classify films?
(Film classification provides a means by which society can restrict access to films considered inappropriate for children and teenagers, especially films that contain frightening images, acts of cruelty and coarse language.)
- Why are young children more vulnerable to sexual, coarse or violent content?
(They don't always understand the difference between reality and what they see in a movie; they are more susceptible to imitating acts that they see on-screen. They don't have a full understanding of the contexts underlying some film scenes.)
- What about teenagers? Do you feel that you need the same protection? Why or why not?
- Who develops these classifications?
(In Canada, this is done through provincial ratings boards. However, these film classification boards don't set the standards themselves, but rather rely on existing legislation in rating films.)
- Who shares the responsibility for guiding young viewers?
(The broadcast and film industry, governments, educators, parents and other family members all share the responsibility of protecting young people from inappropriate images.)
- How do you think we classify films that we get from the U.S.?
(These films are already classified by the Motion Picture Association of America, but they still must be reviewed by provincial film classification boards.)
- What are some problems that film classification boards might face in Canada?
(Viewers may not understand information captions, inconsistency between provincial film classification boards, cost surrounding having seven different classification systems, lack of people to enforce classifications, easy access to films via pay-television channels and video rentals.)

Activity One

Ask your students:

- What's your opinion of film classifications?

Distribute Rating the Movies to students and discuss their responses.

Place the overhead of your own province's Rating System on the blackboard and discuss with class. Ask your students:

- For examples of films from each category.
- Whether they agree or disagree with these guidelines.
- How these ratings compared to their own standards.



Activity Two

- Distribute the article *Torture Films and How Kids Get To See Them* to students.
- When they have completed the questions, discuss answers with class.

Part Two: Video and television rating systems

Guided Discussion:

Classifications for films in theatres can be easily enforced because the ticket sellers act as "gatekeepers," restricting access where necessary. But once a film has completed its theatre run, it is circulated as a home video and finally, as a television movie. Both have their own classification issues.

Ask your students:

- What are some problems with classifying home videos?
With home videos, there is some control at the video store level, but once a video is in the home, there is little that can be done to restrict access to it unless family members play a role. Added to this problem is the issue of video ratings. First, there is a difference between Canadian home video ratings and the Motion Picture Association of America rating system, with the Canadian system often being the more lenient of the two (for example, some videos which have been rated R by the Americans have received the more lenient rating of 14A in Canada).
- Place Video Rating Systems: A Comparison onto the overhead projector and discuss with class.
This discrepancy is further complicated by the way in which the Canadian system determines home video ratings - by averaging the different ratings that the individual provincial film classification boards give the movies when they are released in Canadian theatres. On top of this, some home-video outlets like Blockbuster Videos have created their own rating stickers, so by the time you pick up your Friday night movie, it can have as many as four stickers on it - no wonder people are confused!

Aside from *Seven*, other movies that have received more lenient ratings in Canada include:

- *King Pin*: PG-13 to PG
- *The Fan*: restricted to 14A
- *Sleepers*: restricted to 14A
- *Last Man Standing*: restricted to 14A
- *Tin Cup*: restricted to PG

Ask your students for other examples.



- Let's take this issue one step further, to television. In 1995, the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council received a complaint regarding a telecast of *Silence of the Lambs*. At issue was how a movie, which was classified as restricted in theatres, could be shown on a regular television station. (Teachers who want to explore this particular case in further detail can find it in the case study *You Be the Judge: CITY-TV re: Silence of the Lambs* and *Silence of the Lambs: The Verdict*). The Council ruled in favour of the television station, stating that the viewer advisories used by CITY-TV provided sufficient warning to viewers in this instance and that the edited version of the film that appeared on TV was different from the theatre version. However, the issue of restricted movies on television is still a contentious issue for many television viewers.

Canadian television ratings classify programs according to violent content, sex, nudity and coarse language and have been designed to work with the V-Chip, an electronic device that allows parents to block television programming which they feel is inappropriate for their children.

- Place Canadian Television Classifications onto the overhead projector and discuss with class.
- Ask your students: How do these ratings compare with movie and video ratings we have looked at?

Activity Three

- Distribute article: "TV Violence Warnings Lure Teens" to students.
- Divide class in half for a debate on this issue with one side arguing that advisories on television and in video games are nothing more than lures, and the other side arguing that they are necessary safeguards. (An interesting angle on this debate might be the role of others, such as parents and other members of society in upholding these advisories.) or
- Ask students to write a 500-word expository essay advocating either side of this debate.

Activity Four

How can the film classification system be improved?

- Divide your class into groups
- Each group will create a new rating system for films. Students can create separate classification systems for film, television and home videos, or they can create a universal system. Whichever they choose, students must provide a written rationale for their new system(s).
- This assignment includes the creation of categories with explanations for each, and the accompanying symbols.

Evaluation

- *Torture Films and How Kids Get To See Them* assignment.
- Expository essay or class debate on TV violence warnings.
- Group film classification project.



Video Rating Systems: A Comparison

Canadian Home Video Rating System	Motion Picture Association of America Rating system
General viewing. Suitable for all audiences.	Appropriate for all ages. This is a film containing nothing which would be offensive to parents. There are no strong words or sex scenes; there is no nudity or drug content and violence is at a minimum.
Parental guidance advised. Theme or content may not be suitable for all children.	Parental guidance suggested, contains some material not suitable for children. There may be some profanity and some violence. There is no drug use or explicit sex.
Suitable for people 14 years of age and older. Those under 14 should view with an adult. No rental or purchase by those under 14. Parents cautioned. May contain: violence, coarse language and/or sexually suggestive scenes.	Parents are strongly cautioned that some material is unsuitable for children under 13. Drug use would require this rating as would the single use of a sexually-derived expletive.
Suitable for people 18 years of age and older. Persons under 18 should view with an adult. No rental or purchase by those under 18. Parents strongly cautioned. Will likely contain: explicit violence, frequent coarse language, sexual activity and/or horror.	Anyone under the age of 17 will require an accompanying adult or adult guardian. May include hard language, drug use, tough violence, nudity within sexual scenes and the use of more than one expletive.
Restricted to 18 years of age and over. No rental or purchase by those under 18. Content not suitable for minors. Video contains frequent use of sexual activity, brutal graphic violence, intense horror and/or other disturbing content.	No-one under 17 is admitted (age limit will vary in certain areas).
Contains material not subject to classification, e.g. documentaries, nature, travel, music, culture, sports and leisure, educational and instructional information.	



Canadian TV Classification System

The rating system for English-language programming has six levels, plus an Exempt category for programming which is not required to be classified.

The types of programs which must be classified are:

- children's programming: any programming produced specifically for viewers from ages 2-12
- drama programming: dramatic series and soap operas, made-for-television movies, comedy series
- "reality-shows": defined as reality-based dramatic programming where real events are "re-created" or where coverage of real events are packaged for broadcast as entertainment rather than information/documentary programming
- feature films: theatrical productions subsequently aired by television stations and networks

EXEMPT

Exempt programming includes: news, sports, documentaries and other information programming; talk shows, music videos, and variety programming



CHILDREN

Programming intended for children with this designation must adhere to the provisions of the Children's section of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) Voluntary Code on Violence in Television Programming.

As this programming is intended for younger children under the age of 8 years, it will pay careful attention to themes which could threaten their sense of security and well-being. As programming for children requires particular caution in the depiction of violence, there will be no realistic scenes of violence. Depictions of aggressive behaviour will be infrequent and limited to portrayals that are clearly imaginary and unrealistic in nature.

Violence Guidelines

Might contain occasional comedic, unrealistic depictions

Other Content Guidelines

Language- no offensive language

Sex/Nudity- none



CHILDREN OVER 8 YEARS

This classification is applied to children's programming that is generally considered acceptable for youngsters 8 years and over to view on their own. It is suggested that a parent/guardian co-view programming assigned this classification with younger children under the age of 8.



Programming with this designation adheres to the provisions of the Children's Section of the CAB Voluntary Code on Violence. These include not portraying violence as the preferred, acceptable, or only way to resolve conflict; or encouraging children to imitate dangerous acts which they may see on the screen.

Programming within this classification might deal with themes which could be unsuitable for younger children. References to any such controversial themes shall be discreet and sensitive to the 8-12 year age range of this viewing group.

Violence Guidelines

Any realistic depictions will be infrequent, discreet, of low intensity, and shall portray the consequences of violence. Violence portrayed must be within the context of the storyline or character development. Might include mild physical violence, comedic violence, comic horror, special effects; fantasy, supernatural, or animated violence

Other Content Guidelines

Language- no profanity

Might have infrequent use of language which may be considered by some to be socially offensive or discriminatory, and then only if employed within the context of storyline or character development.

Sex/Nudity- none



GENERAL

Considered acceptable for all age groups. Appropriate viewing for the entire family.

This is programming intended for a broad, general audience. While not designed specifically for children, it is understood that younger viewers may be part of the audience. Therefore programming within this classification shall contain very little violence, either physical, verbal or emotional.

It will be sensitive to themes which could threaten a younger child's sense of security, and will depict no realistic scenes of violence which minimize or gloss over the effects of violent acts.

Violence Guidelines

Minimal, infrequent

May contain comedic, unrealistic depictions

Contains no frightening special effects not required by storyline

Other Content Guidelines

Language- may contain inoffensive slang, -no profanity

Sex/Nudity- none





PARENTAL GUIDANCE

This programming, while intended for a general audience, may not be suitable for younger children (under the age of 8). Parents/guardians should be aware that there might be content elements which some could consider inappropriate for unsupervised viewing by children in the 8-13 age range.

Programming within this classification might address controversial themes or issues. Cognizant that pre-teens and early teens could be part of this viewing group, particular care must be taken not to encourage imitational behaviour, and consequences of violent actions shall not be minimized.

Violence Guidelines

Any depiction of conflict and/or aggression will be limited and moderate; it might include physical, fantasy, or supernatural violence.

Any such depictions should not be pervasive, and must be justified within the context of theme, storyline or character development.

Other Content Guidelines

Language- might contain infrequent and mild profanity

Might contain mildly suggestive language

Sex/Nudity- could possibly contain brief scenes of nudity

Might have limited and discreet sexual references or content when appropriate to the storyline or theme



OVER 14 YEARS

Programming with this classification contains themes or content elements which might not be suitable for viewers under the age of 14. Parents are strongly cautioned to exercise discretion in permitting viewing by pre-teens and early teens without parent/guardian supervision, as programming with this classification could deal with mature themes and societal issues in a realistic fashion.

Violence Guidelines

While violence could be one of the dominant elements of the storyline, it must be integral to the development of plot or character.

Might contain intense scenes of violence.

Other Content Guidelines

Language -could possibly include strong or frequent use of profanity

Sex/Nudity -might include scenes of nudity and/or sexual activity within the context of narrative or theme



ADULTS

Intended for viewers 18 years and older.

This classification applies to programming which could contain any or all of the following content elements which would make the program unsuitable for viewers under the age of 18.



Violence Guidelines

Might contain depictions of violence, which while integral to the development of plot, character or themes, are intended for adult viewing, and thus are not suitable for audiences under 18 years of age.

Other Content Guidelines

Language- might contain graphic language

Sex/Nudity- might contain explicit portrayals of sex and/or nudity

This information is taken from the Action Group on Violence on Television (AGVOT) Web site. Visit AGVOT's V-Chip Canada Web site to learn more about the V-chip and how the Canadian TV classification system was developed.



Rating the Movies

It is the job of film classification boards to help parents to protect children and teenagers from inappropriate content. For what age would you classify the following:

A movie containing *some* violence, coarse language, and sexually suggestive scenes.

- Any age under 14 with parental guidance
- 14 and older only
- Under 18 accompanied by an adult
- 18 and older only

A movie containing *frequent* coarse language, graphic sexual activity, explicit violence and horror.

- Any age
- Under 14 with parental guidance
- 14 and older only
- Under 18 accompanied by an adult
- 18 and older only

A movie that contains violent sports or violent, prolonged, hand-to-hand combat resulting in tissue damage, blood-letting, or murder in non-graphic detail.

- Any age
- Under 14 with parental guidance
- 14 and older only
- Under 18 accompanied by an adult
- 18 and older only

A movie that contains graphic horror.

- Any age
- Under 14 with parental guidance
- 14 and older only
- Under 18 accompanied by an adult
- 18 and older only

A movie that encourages and/or glamorizes alcohol, drug use or violence.

- Any age
- Under 14 with parental guidance
- 14 and older only
- Under 18 accompanied by an adult
- 18 and older only



Torture Films and How Kids Get To See Them

By Doug Atkinson

May 6, 1997

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Last night I saw the movie *Seven*. The fact that I saw a movie is no big deal. I'm in the business. It's my job. And in fact *Seven* was the third movie I've seen in as many nights.

It was revolting.

Oh, the film was brilliant enough; ironically, its very brilliance was the main reason it was revolting; in fact, the movie is practically a film-noir horror masterpiece. David Fincher's directing was quirky and well-managed, the chase scenes were expertly staged - as hair-raising as any I've seen. Morgan Freeman was solid, Brad Pitt was angry and brooding, Kevin Spacey was chilling, and the supporting cast was, well - suitably supportive.

But the result of all this skill, all this craft, all this excellence, was to logarithmically magnify the impact. *Seven's* grotesque brown-grey world evolved into a dark, devoted homage to the grisly physical excesses of medieval torture theology.

The hopeless brutality and macabre, stomach-wrenching, cockroach-infested gore, woven together with a cruel retribution theme and the not-so-subtle message that our civilization is in utter decay; that an individual can do nothing about it, and that evil runs rampant and utterly unopposed through a weary, cynical world, combined to strike me with mind-numbing force.

I have seen just about everything in mainstream cinema and pride myself on my resistance to the negative power of film; nevertheless, I fought the almost overwhelming urge to leave more than once. But the film was too brilliant, too well-crafted, just to abandon. I was hoping beyond hope that a film so well made, so carefully written, so ingenious, would offer up some unimaginably unique twist, something that could possibly justify the ugly, vomit-inducing atrocities. But as Morgan Freeman's Lieutenant Sommerset warned me at the two-thirds mark of the film: There ain't going to be no happy ending to this.

Still, I sat there through to the end despite myself, overriding my flight-instincts in the vain hope of some redemption. There was none. The filmmakers' brilliance, as it turned out, was to be used only to devise ever-more inventively grotesque forms of torment. Even as the credits started to roll, I rose and stumbled out.

As I said, *Seven* was revolting.

But so what? It was revolting because it was supposed to be revolting. The film was expertly crafted to be just that. Now, whether it was intended as social commentary or the producers were simply appealing to the very worst in human beings because they know it's guaranteed to make a lot of money, I couldn't possibly say.

Don't get me wrong. I don't intend to make this a tirade against a society that has elevated power-drill in the back of the head style atrocity to the level of entertainment. It is not intended as an indictment of the culture that made this treatise on torture number one at the box office. I'm against censorship in almost any form myself, and I'm not particularly



concerned whether adults are going to be offended, or appalled, or disgusted by a certain film, or even that they would run from the theatres screaming and throwing up. This is, after all, the price we pay for freedom of expression. But that's not the point.

The Rating

The point is that *Seven* is not a restricted film. It is rated AA. The kind of rating given to a cop film. This is what I expected but this is not what I got. For those of you unfamiliar with the rating system, AA means Adult Accompaniment, which means that anyone can see this film. Anyone.

Children over 14 can go absolutely unescorted, while children under 14 are permitted to see the film as long as they are accompanied by an adult (an adult being anyone who according to the law appears to be 18 or older).

Needless to say, after I saw this film, I thought there must have been a publishing mistake in the newspaper ads. Children, unattended or otherwise, at this vicious gorefest? But sure enough, when I rechecked all the papers again, they listed the film AA. I called the Ontario Film Review Board, certain there must be some catastrophic error. Nope. *Seven* was rated AA.

Certain that there must have been a substantial information piece attached to this rating that I missed, I looked to see if I had overlooked any obvious warnings.

Sure enough, there were warnings. In the newspaper ad, I was warned about violence and coarse language. The poster outside the theatre made no mention of violence. It warned only of coarse language and drug and alcohol use. Both ads did, however, assure me the film was not suitable for children.

Fair enough. The film is oh-so not suitable for kids. And the characters did use coarse language. And they shot at each other and hit each other on the head, too. As for the alcohol and drug use, Morgan and Brad drank wine and beer a couple of times and mentioned going to a bar. The only drug use I remember was peripheral.

The Visuals

But what the information pieces failed to tell me was that I would also see: a dead person bound hand and foot with barbed wire, a naked disembowelled corpse on an autopsy table, pictures of a man who had been forced at gunpoint to cut off parts of his own body, pictures of human beings in mortal agony as they were being torn apart, a lurid scene of a man fastened to a bed for a year by the most disgusting means having been tortured by methods worthy of any medieval inquisitor and still clinging horribly to life when found, and the pièce de résistance, two separate scenes of mutilated, bound and blood-covered young women, one horribly violated because she was lucky enough to be a prostitute, and one disfigured simply because she was attractive and happened to be proud of it.

This, of course, is to mention only a few of the macabre visuals. The information piece also did not tell me that, in addition to hearing the dreaded coarse language, I would also be a party to the detailed descriptions of each victim's horrific agonies, including things like being forced to eat sharp pieces of plastic, having tubes inserted into one's genitals, that I would hear about a man being forced at gunpoint to rape a woman with a razor-sharp strap-on steel blade, and about a man chewing his own tongue off in mortal agony, to mention only a few incidents in this literal litany of suffering.



Where were the information pieces that mention brutal violence or torture or sexual violence? Do we have to actually see these events occur in the film to justify fair warning? Isn't the grisly aftermath and a graphic description of these events good enough?

And what about *Seven's* mature theme?

Aren't the themes of hopelessness, despair, the inability of the individual to effect any change, murderous insanity, unthinkable cruelty administered in the context of warped religion, and the triumph of evil over everyone and everything it encounters mature enough?

In my opinion this is the worst part of all, this is the very worst message you could possibly send to any child of any era, particularly a 14-year-old child of today's high-tech, pressure-packed, information-loaded, over-crowded and maybe even doomed society. You can't do anything. Everything is hopeless. Evil and cruelty rule the day.

Imagine. This rating allows a 4-year-old into *Seven*, provided that someone who has just turned 18 is with that 4-year-old. And that's helpful in the case of this film, because the killer writes messages in human blood, so the preschoolers are going to need someone to read the words for them.

So what, you say? No conscientious adult would take a little kid to something like this, right?

The Reality

I have bad news for you. I was at a matinée of Arnold Schwarzenegger's *Predator* (rated AA) a few years ago, and there were plenty of little kids in the audience. The one advantage to this is that you can see over their heads. But imagine the nerve of these kids! I could barely hear the alien ripping people apart over their annoying blood-curdling shrieks. Especially the one near-apoplectic 5-year-old whose parents finally got the message that maybe he wasn't having fun and left.

But believe me, that's not the worst part. Think on this: your Grade 9-age children can go to *Seven* all by themselves.

Of course, the film's information piece does say not suitable for children. Sure. Find me a 14-year-old anywhere who thinks he or she is a child. And while you're at it, find me a 14-year-old who would be diverted by the warning coarse language, or violence. You might find a couple. Maybe.

But the bottom line is that your 14-year-olds can see this movie without your consent, without you ever having the chance to discuss it, its horrible message or gut-wrenching, nauseating violence. In fact, without your ever even knowing they've seen it at all.

You think 14-year-olds haven't seen this film? I have more bad news for you. When I canvassed the staff of a couple of theatres about the age level of the attendees, I was told that part of the audience was unescorted and definitely under 18. Big surprise: Brad Pitt is huge with teenage girls. They'll flock to see him no matter what he's in, and get the rest of the package like some kind of hellish bonus.

The Solution

Now, perhaps the criteria the Ontario Film Review Board uses needs to be re-examined, and I'm all for that. But it isn't the board's job to watch out for our children. It's our job. Its job is to make sure that films meet certain restrictions, and



to provide us with as much information on those films as possible so we can make informed choices of our own.

But the bottom line is that kids who are just old enough to think they're not kids any more can go to films like *Seven*. And the theatres won't stop them; in fact, they're not allowed to stop them.

Okay, then. Let's give such films an R-rating. That'll take care of that, right?

Wrong. I have more bad news for you. Even had *Seven* received an R-rating, and the kids weren't allowed into the theatre, many of them will still see it, sooner or later. Because the real problem is that these restricted movies are not restricted at all. Once they go to video, it's game over.

The Inevitable

Obviously, children cannot legally go to an R-rated film in the theatre (but they do). And nearly every major theatrically released R-rated film ends up on video. It is, of course, just as illegal to show a restricted video to anyone under 18, but we all know the video business.

A lot of video stores will rent anything to anyone. They have to. They can't afford to turn down a single rental. And while many reputable stores strictly refuse to do so, there are a lot of parents out there, weary of the constant battle with their teenagers, who will rent R-rated films and allow their teens to watch them or even use these films as quality time together.

In many cases this is not a total disaster. The teens usually live, and a few even go on to lead useful, productive lives. And anyway, what are you going to do about it? The point is, the kids are seeing restricted stuff, and they're going to continue to do so.

The Solution (2)

I therefore propose a new rating: the S rating; that is, suitable only for sadistic adults. Of course, it could have any name you like; for instance, the J rating, as in jaded palates only. Or maybe the RV rating, for really vile, or maybe the TF rating, torture is fun, or the IEI rating, insensitive and emotionally immature viewers only, or maybe even the KKGHTF rating; the kicks keep getting harder to find rating.

For myself, I prefer the simple S rating. It has a certain sliminess that is somehow fitting.

All right, then. What are the problems of implementing an S rating? First of all, any film tagged with the S stigma would instantly lose a huge portion of its audience (just like the U.S. dreaded NC-17 rating or our bogus X rating), and Hollywood knows it. By keeping the rating categories as broad as possible, they get everyone to go: Mr. and Mrs. I-Heard-This-Is-A-Good-Movie, the jaded sadists who can spot a film like this a mile away, and the pubescent Brad Pitt fans.

Voila! Big box office bucks.

So the studios will obviously object to any new rating like our hypothetical S. It's bad enough for them when a film gets an R or NC17-rating and the lucrative 14-to-18 audience is supposedly shut out. Imagine if a film were listed as being suitable only for sadistic adults, hell, even the sadists would be embarrassed to show up! An S rating would be the kiss of death in the theatres.



And just as with films that we know are sex films, no parent in his or her right mind would allow a child to see an S-rated film when it comes out on video. But the way things stand right now, children will continue to be exposed to this material.

The Reality (2)

The thought that we are creating, marketing and serving up gruesome banquets of horrific impressions to these most precious beings, our children, is even more revolting than the theme and content of *Seven* and the swelling host of films like it. We are sending our children into huge cinemas to be bombarded by scenes of torture and murder on 30-foot screens, with giant sound systems to add to the punch, and we are shipping these same impressions right into our homes via video and pay-per-view so that our kids can feast on these images of atrocity again and again and again and again.

We're showing our kids snuff films. Torture films.

If you did something comparable to a dog, you'd probably get arrested. It's bad enough that a society would allow one of its industries to offer images of gruesome death as high entertainment. To me the sickness in this is so evident that it barely needs pointing out. But as high entertainment for its children?

It's obvious that the film industry is way out of control. It's not just the level of violence that is sky-rocketing, it's the nature and the focus of the violence. Fetish violence, turn-on violence, increasingly authentic, increasingly horrific, increasingly frequent images of atrocities are vomited onto us and our young in the guise of cutting-edge social commentary and art, often accompanied by themes of apocalyptic despair.

To quote Jim Carry's Riddler in *Batman Forever*: Was that over the top? I can never tell.

The movie industry has the same problem. If it can't control itself, then someone's going to have to bell that cat. Before it's too late.

The following is the text of a letter from Doug Atkinson to the Ontario Film Review Board. Doug Atkinson is co-author of a video column for Sesame Street's parent magazine and the book Videos for Kids: The Essential, Indispensable Parent's Guide to Children's Movies on Video (Prima Publishing, 1995), as well as co-founder of The Original Kids Video Company, 40 Scollard St., Toronto.

Article: Torture Films and How Kids Get To See Them

Assignment

Answer the following questions:

1. What type of film content did the author expect, judging by the 14-AA rating and newspaper warnings?
2. What did he not expect to see in a 14-AA film?
3. Do you agree with the author that this film was incorrectly rated? Why or why not?
4. How would you have rated this movie? Support your opinion with specific details.
5. What are two problems that the author acknowledges regarding teen access to this movie?
6. The author of this article uses satire to address what he considers to be the main problem with ratings. What is this problem?



TV Violence Warnings Lure Teens

The Globe and Mail, May 1, 1997

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If, as an advertiser, you want teenagers to see your commercial, just air it during a show which broadcasts a warning of violence.

This is the conclusion of a study by researchers at the University of Western Ontario's Richard Ivey School of Business. But the study itself comes with a warning. The advertising industry may be tempted by the findings and saturate the shows with ads for youth-oriented products. This move may render the ads ineffective.

The authors of the study, professors Jay Handelman and Michael Parent, explain the violence warnings act almost like an advertisement, "inducing interest in the adolescent viewer to watch the program."

The findings come at a time when parents, teachers and other critics are most concerned about violent and otherwise unsuitable programming on television. The debate also follows the release of new rating systems in Canada and the U.S., which are meant to alert parents and caregivers to violence, sex, or coarse language in television programming.

Some have voiced concern that the ratings, which flash on-screen before a program goes to air, actually create a "forbidden fruit" effect and heighten the appetite for violent programs.

The results of this study will be of interest to companies that advertise fast food, soft drinks, video games and running shoes, products which appeal to the youth market. The research suggests that teens have a significant recall of commercials that are shown during programs preceded by a warning.

Peter Swain, president of Media Buying Services Ltd., a company which places ads on TV, says some of the shows popular with adolescents include *The X-files*, *The Outer Limits*, and *Millennium*. The broadcasters of these programs don't have trouble filling the commercial spots.

Swain cautions that these programs contain risks for the advertisers. While advertisers who target teens have gravitated towards the more violent programs, there is also a reverse trend emerging from the backlash against TV violence.

"It doesn't take much to create a bandwagon effect and go after an advertiser," said Swain. He also said that advertisers aren't finding their audience as easily. Teen TV viewing has dropped 10 per cent over the past five years.

He believes that this drop can be attributed to a shift in interests – more teens are more interested in their home computers.

