

that use a common set of conventions or that revolve around similar issues or circumstances. Some typical genres are war, horror, romance, Western, crime, action, comedy, disaster, adventure, mystery, sports, and fantasy.

Have your students identify as many stereotypes (ethnic, gender, age, etc.) as they can. Ask them if they have seen these stereotypes in movies, on television, on the Web, in books, magazines, or comic books, or in other media. Have them discuss why those stereotypes were used in each situation. Do the stereotypes have a positive effect, a negative effect, or both? Have your students discuss whether there is any truth to the stereotypes they have identified.

Then have your students list as many film genres as they can. Have students discuss the way genre and stereotype are related. For example, do Westerns have specific stereotypes? Do sports films?

EXTENDED ACTIVITY

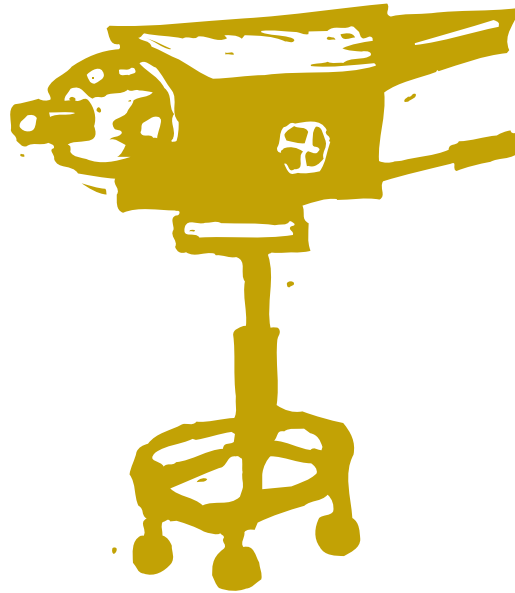
Show your students a movie that uses a negative stereotype. Some suggestions are *The Oxbow Incident*, *In the Heat of the Night*, *Mystic River*, *Crash*, *My Left Foot*, *The Siege*, and *Juno*. Ask them if films have an obligation to present all groups in a positive manner. Discuss the ways a movie can stimulate dialogue and reflect reality without belittling a type of individual or an entire group. Or have them research and discuss the life of someone in film, politics, or another walk of life who has overcome stereotypes in his or her career.

ACTIVITY FOUR YOUR TURN

Movie content is affected by its writers, directors, producers, and distributors, among others. Writers are often advised to “write what they know,” and may easily overlook stories of people from dissimilar cultural or ethnic backgrounds. If producers do not think that a given movie idea is commercial (a decision often based on the way similar films have performed in the past), they may be less willing to work on it, and distributors may be less interested in distributing it.

Although certain filmmakers and members of the media make efforts to search out stories and characters from outside their experience, some viewers may approach these stories and characters with suspicion. They may feel that a movie portraying teenage Latina girls, for example, is less truthful or less real when it is created by older white men than when the filmmakers are closer in age and experience to their subject matter.

Have your students consider the values and tastes of their age and ethnic group. Ask them to identify



movies or television programs that embody these values. Ask them to name movies that try to persuade the viewer to think in a certain way. Then have them list movies that were made mainly to entertain. Ask your students to suggest a story they have not seen in the movies or characters they feel have been ignored. Have them identify any stereotypes they might use in their story. Ask them which genre would best suit their ideas and why.

Divide the students into pairs or small groups and ask each to research and develop one of their story concepts and write an outline or a treatment for a movie. Ask them to discuss their story’s message and to identify their movie’s intended audience.

Using their own drawings or copies of images from books, magazines, or the Web, ask them to put together a storyboard illustrating their story. Have them consider the ways that color, line, shape, and composition convey the mood and emotions of their story. What other techniques can they use to reinforce the story’s message?

Have each group present its storyboard and any other supporting materials to the other students. Ask the students to critique each presentation using the criteria in the previous activities. Have them consider how the story could focus on another message by being presented differently. Ask them how the story would change if it were developed in a different genre or were aimed at a different audience.

EXTENDED ACTIVITY

Have your students write a short script for one or more of the stories they have developed. If you have access to a video camera, film the script and ask your students to discuss the result, covering some of the above topics.

