

THE SEARCHING YEARS...a series of open-end films



Teachers' guide for five titles / Theme: Dating and Marriage

Everything in these films is real.
It occurred spontaneously, as you
see it.

Although the film concept is
unusual, it came about quite
simply. For several months, I had
been meeting with young people,
collecting material for educa-
tional films on adolescence.
Finally we all realized that the
meetings themselves offered a
valuable film format.

So I chose 20 of the young people
from varying backgrounds, added a
role-play adviser, and we filmed
for six days.

Kent MacKenzie

Producer-Director

produced by DIMENSION FILMS

distributed by CHURCHILL FILMS

662 North Robertson Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90069

THE SEARCHING YEARS...a series of open-end films

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THE FIRST FILMS IN THIS SERIES concerned the Family:

I OWE YOU NOTHING! (obligations in the family)

MOM, WHY WON'T YOU LISTEN? (communicating with Mother)

WAIT UNTIL YOUR FATHER GETS HOME! (male vs. female roles)

CAN A PARENT BE HUMAN? (the "ideal" parent)

IVAN AND HIS FATHER (the difficulty of change)

AWARDS won by these films include:

Medalist, Atlanta Film Festival

Secondary Social Studies Film of the Year, So. Calif.

Social Science Association

Finalist, American Film Festival

Chris Certificate

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THESE FILMS:

THE MOST IMPORTANT advice we can give you is to SEE A FILM BEFORE USING IT. These films are provocative and moving for adults as well as students--it is important to have some time to reflect on your own reactions before meeting your class.

THE TEACHING GOALS:

1. To help each student to understand himself better--to know his own feelings, values and expectations.
2. To reassure students that they are not strange, different, or alone--others share their problems and feelings.
3. To sharpen students' ability to listen, to understand and empathize with others.
4. To help students express themselves more honestly and fearlessly.

5. To help students learn to deal with personal stress by sharing it with other people.
6. To help students develop more satisfying social relationships.

THE TEACHING METHOD is to help those students who wish to, to bring feelings and conflicts into the open. In the relatively safe setting of the classroom, various ways of handling these feelings and conflicts can be tried and compared. The more deeply each student involves himself, the more he will sharpen his evaluative skills and increase his ability to show his feelings and respond to the feelings of others.

THE TEACHER'S ROLE is that of facilitator. He must invite open expression of ideas and feelings, help clarify meanings, and encourage inter-action. He

must be non-judgmental, but this does NOT mean he must be neutral. There is a world of difference between a teacher saying "I think you are wrong," and his saying "I feel differently about that than you do." The former passes judgment and ends communication; the latter invites comparison and continues communication.

SOME CAUTIONS:

1. Sociological and psychological analysis of some of the films is fascinating--to adults. It may be meaningless and even irritating to students. They need concrete applications to their own lives, with concepts limited to those they can use.
2. It may also be very tempting to use events in the films to bolster one's personal moral code, whether it be traditional or avant-garde.

Such attempts will close off communication between teacher and students, and will defeat the teaching goals.

3. It is also difficult to avoid letting the discussion degenerate into a free-for-all rap session, with the teacher playing the role of Pal. For instance, we have found that the opening discussion after some of these films is apt to be a general attack on parents, with students clearly enjoying the chance to blow off some steam.

But more is usually happening beneath the surface; some students with non-conforming opinions may be reluctant to speak up. The teacher's job is to help create the climate of trust which will enable students to take a chance and explore the deeper questions.

4. The discussion need not go on at length, nor is it necessary to reach a consensus. Once each student has been stirred to examine his own position, and there has been some fruitful interaction, it may be best to end.

SOME TIPS ON ROLE-PLAYING:

1. DON'T RUSH IN before your class is ready. Let them warm up to the issues for a while. As they go at it, watch for those who seem most involved. Call on them



to demonstrate--"Why don't you show us?"

(WARNING: Try to avoid the tendency to short-cut this stage by calling on your "old-reliables." Maybe if you hold back a short while, someone unexpected will jump in.)

2. HELP THEM GET STARTED by setting the scene concretely--"Where are you?" (moving chairs and tables) "What time of day is it?" "What is each person doing?"
3. TRUST YOUR JUDGMENT to let the role-play go on, or to interrupt. It does not have to finish.
4. GET FEEDBACK FROM THE CLASS--You may ask the role-players to hold their positions while you ask the class--"Do you believe what is happening?" "How does _____ feel?" "Would you like to ask any of the role-

players any questions?" The role-players answer in character.

5. SWITCH players. You may want to change roles among the players. Or, if a class member has strong feelings, you may substitute him as a role-player. Always try to INVOLVE the students who express themselves.
6. DOUBLING is a technique used in many of the filmed role-plays. Persons who "double" (there may be more than one at a time) try to speak the inner thoughts and feelings of the character.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

Small group discussion may be a valuable alternative to whole-class discussion. Each group can share its conclusions with the class. This approach may allow for more involvement of quieter students.

Creative writing, using the films as a springboard for stories, poems and plays is another indirect way to allow students to express their responses.



film title: ONE OR MANY?

length: 13 minutes (discussion
break after 5 minutes)

SYNOPSIS

What do you want out of dating? Many different answers are explored in this film. In the 9th and 10th Grades, some young people date for status reasons, others need more personal relationships, and some need dating very little. For many, it is hard to change from dating games to more open relationships.

There is a space to stop the projector. The film resumes: Would you rather concentrate on one person at a time, or spread your interest among several?



ERNEST



OLIVIA



GREG



HARRIET



RIC



TOM



BARBARA



ANN



KRISTIN



SALLY



MIKE



KENT MACKENZIE

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE TEACHER

INTRODUCING THE FILM:

Here is one possibility--
Very few people have consistent dating experiences--everyone has ups and downs, some fun and some sadness. Also, people want different things at different times. It helps if you have some idea of what you really want at this particular time in your life--you may want something different tomorrow--but what do you want now? That's what this film is about.

AT THE DISCUSSION BREAK:

Some students, especially 10th Graders, may find it hard to start talking about this film. Even so, it may be best to let them try for a while.

1. Any discussion?
2. What do you think about all this?

Later, you may choose to help get them going.

3. In the film, the people talk about changes in dating as you go through the 9th, 10th and 11th grades and so on. What changes have you noticed?
4. They also talk about people in the same grade having very different attitudes toward dating. What differences have you noticed?

5. Here are four statements about dating in the 10th Grade:

- 1) Harriet--I went around with a lot of football guys; it sort of made me feel big.
- 2) Ann--I think by then it becomes no longer your group and your boy friend, but just you and your boy friend.
- 3) Mike--It all boils down to playing games to see who got the best looking person.
- 4) Tom--It wasn't that important to me at the time.



Do you know people who seem to agree with any of these?

Note: Since many of the film group are 17 and 18, their comments on 10th Grade dating are a bit condescending. It may reassure 10th Graders to realize that dating for looks and prestige can be just as natural as dating for other reasons. For example:

6. Several people imply that dating in the 10th Grade is often dishonest in some way. Ric says,

--I think people who don't need an honest relationship tend to play games longer.

Do you think 10th Grade relationships are less honest than relationships among 11th or 12th graders?

7. Barbara talks about the need to pretend that you don't like someone, even though you are very interested. Does that sound familiar? Why do people do it?
8. Barbara also says she realized one day she didn't need to pretend any more. What changes do you think that caused in her relationships with boys?
9. What changes are you looking forward to in your dating in the next year or two? For example, do you expect to concentrate more on one or two people at a time, or to date many people?
10. Role-play (See "Some Tips on Role-Playing", Page 5) what might happen when a girl goes up to a boy and tells him straight out that she likes him. You might set it up as follows:

How do you boys feel about a girl coming up to you and saying she likes you? Would you believe her? Anybody feel a little uneasy about it?

Look for a boy who obviously would be put off by such an approach. Then continue:

Any girls here feel like like Barbara? That you're tired of pretending and playing games? OK _____ could you show us? How would you like to be able to approach boys? And _____ you're the boy.

Use the boy you spotted before.

AFTER THE FILM:

Again, it may be best to lay back and see what happens.

11. Any discussion?

If necessary, you can always help them along.

12. Here are some statements from the film:

Greg: If you go for a lot of girls, you can have the security of knowing that there is someone to fall back on.

Olivia: I still feel the need for one person.

Ric: I disagree with people who plan it out, who say I can't pay too much attention to this person because I have to keep it in balance.

Does any of these describe the way some of your friends feel? How do you feel about it?

Note: Another reassuring realization is that conflicting needs and impulses are natural and even necessary during high-school years. Here are several questions leading in that direction.

13. Olivia says she wants one boy friend to comfort and protect her. Do any of you recognize that feeling?
14. Yet she also says she would rather risk being hurt than keep other boys on the string. Does that sound as though she needs to be protected? Does anyone here feel that way?
15. Ernest says he doesn't like to go with 3 or 4 girls because he has enough problems with one. Do any of you recognize that feeling?
16. Yet Ernest also says it's risky to go with just one-- you can get hurt. How do you think he really feels?
17. Which do you think is more important--keeping yourself open to new people, or establishing a deep relationship with one other

person? Is it possible to do both?

18. Many of the people in the film seem to want different things at the same time. Do you think they are unusual? Is there any benefit in feeling this way?



film title:

WHAT GIRLS WANT FROM BOYS

length: 9 minutes

SYNOPSIS

In a close relationship between a boy and a girl, what does each need from the other? Are girls' needs different from boys? These are the issues in this film, which opens with a discussion of why girls prefer dating older boys, and develops into a heated debate over the emotional needs of 10th Grade girls.



PAUL



ANN



GREG



REUBEN



IVAN



AILEEN



BARBARA



SALLY

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE TEACHER

INTRODUCING THE FILM:

Here is one possibility--

Boys sometimes feel that girls are a mystery, and girls sometimes feel that boys just don't understand them. One way some girls look for understanding is to date older boys. Another way, which we will see in this film, is to try to communicate to boys what they really want from a close relationship.

AFTER THE FILM:

This film often sparks a spontaneous discussion.

1. Well? Any reactions?

You may choose to guide it.

2. Several people in the film disagree strongly with Ann's ideas about love and what 10th Grade girls really want--how do you feel about it?

3. Ann lists some things girls want from boys:

"Attention . . . you want to be noticed by a man. You want to know that you're wanted, that you can be liked. . . . that you're physically attractive . . . that you can please someone, that you can make somebody happy . . . that you can get happy by contact with someone else . . . that you can get close to a male."

What would you include on such a list?

4. Several opinions of 10th Grade girls are expressed--

Paul found them "hard and callous",--Ivan says love "means nothing when you're talking about the 10th Grade level,"--Barbara says "they're starting to mature."

Do you feel 10th Grade girls are different than girls a year or two older? In what ways are they different?

5. What about boys? Ann says a 10th Grade Boy "doesn't want to show the girl he likes her too much."--But Reuben says "a guy 16 can be more of a man than a guy 30."

Do you feel 10th Grade boys are different than boys a year or two older? In what ways are they different?

6. Do you think the emotional needs of boys are different from girls? How?
7. At one point, Ann asks "Don't you know how you like to give?" That's a question you may prefer to ask yourself. Would anyone care to share his answer with the rest of us?



film title:

HOW CLOSE CAN YOU GET?

length: 10 minutes

SYNOPSIS:

"No matter how close you get to another person, you are still alone." This belief of Ann's leads into an intense discussion of what people expect from marriage. Should the wife stay at home and keep house? Can you be independent and growing while married? Mike expects to "sacrifice everything for the right person"--Greg and others feel this is impossible and even cruel.



MIKE



ANN



GREG



BROOKE



KRISTIN



IVAN



MIKE SOLOMON

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE TEACHER

INTRODUCING THE FILM:

Here is one possibility--

One thing about marriage--it's practically always a surprise. Because each of us has an idea, maybe even without knowing just what it is, of what it really means to be in love, and how the other person will act. But, often the other person has a different idea. Cleaning up the house may be a loving act to one and meaningless drudgery to the other.

In this film, the young people try to pin down what they really expect from their marriage partners.

AFTER THE FILM:

Your class may feel strongly enough to just dive in:

1. How do you feel about all this?

Or you may choose to point the discussion.

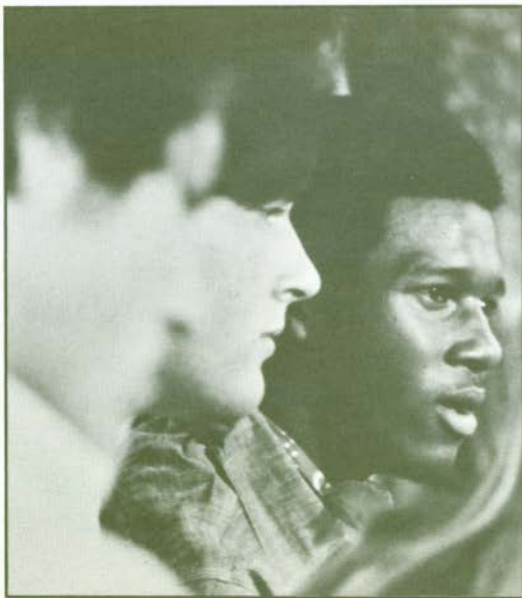
2. Is there anyone in the film who thinks pretty much the way you do?
3. Girls, Mike says he will sacrifice everything for the right person. Would you want to marry someone who feels this way?
4. Boys, Ann says she is going to go out and develop herself independently. How would you feel about marrying a person who expects this?
5. How do you react to these statements from the film:

You can't live with someone if you can't live without them.

I think there's just a part of you that you're not capable of giving to another person. I don't

know if it's my spiritual place in the universe, but it's mine and it's nobody else's and I can't give it away.

6. Do you feel it's a sign of weakness to be totally dependent on another person?
7. Ivan describes a marriage in which "the wife is very weak and she thinks of her



husband as her strength. Together these two may be unbeatable. They may have the best marriage in the world." How does that sound to you?

8. One key conflict in the film occurs in this exchange:

Mike: Sounds like you're going to have a sad set-up in your marriage. I'd hate to marry you.

Ann: I think I have a very healthy way of looking at it. When I'm married I don't want to stay home and clean the house. I don't want my husband to stay home.

Mike: You'll have a sloppy house.

What's your reaction to this conflict?

Why do you think they feel so strongly about it? What does cleaning the house mean to each of them?

Could you imagine two people who feel this way ever getting married? How? What do you think would happen if they did?

9. Ann says, "No matter how close a relationship you have with someone, you are alone." Several people agree with her; others don't. What does "alone" mean to you? Does it make you feel bad, or good, or both to think of being alone? Can you have a good marriage, and still be alone?
10. Do you think the people in the film will change their expectations as time goes along? In what direction? Why? What about yourself?

ACTIVITIES:

1. Ask a student to read aloud the section in The Prophet "On Marriage"; Gibran's thoughts bear directly on the issues in this film.
2. Role-play (See "Some Tips on Role-playing", Page 5) the scene when the husband comes home to find the house a mess and the wife developing herself as an individual. The husband's opening is suggested in the film: "This closet stinks and why isn't supper ready?"
3. Test in a role-play the strength of the concept of the man who will sacrifice



anything. For example, if you have a boy who shares Mike's values about sacrificing everything for the right person, instruct him as follows:

OK, let's try a role-play. You and your wife are a singing act, and you also play guitar.

Then add to him privately:

You come in to tell your wife that you've found bookings in several small clubs around town.

Incidentally, she's the star of the act, but you hope to improve as time goes along. Your music is your greatest joy, along with your wife.

Send him out. Then tell her privately:

A few weeks ago the two of you auditioned for a nationwide TV show. They want you to go on, but as a single. You have real talent. You've decided to accept, even though it means breaking up the act.

