



MOVIE DISCUSSION GUIDE



A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Focusing on the unlikely friendship between Fred Rogers and journalist Lloyd Vogel, “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” is a poignant film telling the story not of Mister Rogers and his neighborhood, but rather Fred Rogers and the impact he had on so many people throughout the course of his life. Inspired by a true story, “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” features a mesmerizing performance by Tom Hanks as Fred Rogers and showcases the many gifts that Fred Rogers shared with all those he encountered. The film is an important reminder of the power of empathy, kindness and quiet in a world that so often lacks these very qualities.

Programming Suggestions

This discussion guide is designed to assist educational programming after viewing the film “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood.” Its purpose is to generate discussion based on social issues found within the movie and for program participants to reflect on themes that might be pertinent to them. Therefore, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to questions in this guide.

The discussion facilitator may choose to utilize one of the following activities as a means of developing discussion:

- Invite an English teacher or Children's Author to come and discuss the role of storytelling in journalism and/or the impact of educational television on children and adults.
- Create a bulletin board with information about Fred Rogers and his work with children. Include images, articles and other information to showcase his work and life.
- Read the Esquire article “Can You Say...Hero” by Tom Junod and discuss as a group the impact that Fred Rogers had on our culture.
- Watch an episode or two of “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” Discuss the lessons and ideas discussed in the show.
- Post banner paper on the wall and ask patrons to post ideas of random acts of kindness. Encourage patrons to act on these ideas in their community.

Issues

Family

Emotions

Relationships

Childhood

Pre-Screening Questions

1. What are your memories of Mister Rogers growing up?
2. How do emotions impact our daily lives for good and bad?

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss Fred Rogers and the impact he had on so many people.
2. Do you think he was simply a kind and empathic person, or were his actions more intentional in nature? Discuss.
3. What does it mean to be kind, to be empathic?
4. Discuss the relationship between Fred and Lloyd.
5. What did Lloyd mean when he said he was a “broken person”?
6. Have you or someone you know ever felt broken? Discuss.
7. Discuss Lloyd’s relationship with his father.
8. What changed in Lloyd that allowed him to forgive his father?
9. Could you forgive a parent who hurt your family the way Lloyd’s father hurt his family? Discuss.
10. What does it mean to forgive someone?
11. How did Lloyd’s anger impact his relationship with his wife and child?
12. How do our emotions shape us?
13. Lloyd meets Joanne, Fred’s wife, and asks how it is being married to a saint. How does she respond?
14. Fred, when asked about fame, says, “Fame is a four-letter word. What matters is what we do with it.” How did Fred Rogers use his fame?
15. Fred and Lloyd go out to eat and while there Fred asks Lloyd to be silent for 60 seconds and think of the loved ones and those that shaped him in his life. What were you thinking of during this scene? Do you think this is an effective/worthwhile exercise?
16. How did Fred Rogers use silence and quiet as a tool to teach?
17. Do you consider Fred Rogers to be a hero? Why or why not?
18. What is a hero to you does being a “hero” mean to you? Who are some of your heroes? Why are they heroes to you?
19. Accepting people for who they are was an important part of Fred Roger’s’ message. Discuss the importance of accepting others and feeling accepted.
20. How did Fred Rogers use puppets to convey hard messages?
21. What are ways you communicate feelings that are maybe too difficult for you to express verbally?
22. Fred Rogers spoke about the importance of childhood and accepting it as a time and experience and not something to be pushed through. Why do you think children were so able to connect easily connected with Mister Rogers?
23. Why does our society seem to push children to grow up fast?
24. How and why did Fred Rogers use his show to discuss hard issues (death, war, divorce) with children?
25. What lessons do we learn in childhood that we as adults need to hold onto? Why is it so hard to keep these lessons and ideas alive in us as adults?

Discussion Questions - cont.

26. Two scenes showcase the power of Mister Rogers and his message: the scene in the subway where everyone sings and the scene in the restaurant where everyone becomes quiet and reflects on those that loved and shaped them. Speak on the power of these scenes and images and what it says about how people feel about Fred Rogers.
27. Lloyd decides to come and stay with his father after he falls ill. How does their relationship change during this time?
28. Fred comes to visit Lloyd's family. Discuss his interactions with Lloyd's father, Jerry.
29. Fred asks Jerry to pray for him. Why does he do this?
30. How does faith impact you, shape you?
31. Discuss the idea of prayer and how Fred Rogers used it as a tool.
32. Do you think a message like Fred Rogers would resonate today? Why or why not?
33. Why do you think a show like "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" has such an impact on people?
34. At one point Mister Rogers says that we need to love people exactly as they are. We don't need to love them for who they will become or if they can change. Reflect on your relationships. Is it difficult to love people just as they are? How would that change your relationships if you did?
35. Mister Rogers gave those around him his undivided attention. He made them feel important by giving his time. In today's distracted society, discuss how phones and technology affect how people pay attention to those around them. How does technology interfere with how we, as a society, are raising our children?
36. How else did Mister Rogers make people feel important? What could we learn from him?
37. What are other childhood shows or activities that have shaped you or had an impact on you?
38. What lessons can we learn from how Fred conducted his life and used his voice to help others?
39. Decency, empathy, caring, accepting, kindness are but a few words to describe the life, actions, goals and teaching of Fred Rogers, aka Mister Rogers. How can we use the concepts to become better people, today, tomorrow and in the future?