

Movie Discussion Guide

RENT

“Love. Hope. Struggle. Triumph.”

This movie tells the story of a year in the life of a group of friends living in New York City as struggling artists. Even with all their “baggage” they come together to love and support one another through the challenges they meet.



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Programming Suggestions

This discussion guide is designed to facilitate educational programs after viewing the film RENT. Its purpose is to generate discussion based on social issues found within the movie and for program participants to reflect on themes that may 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:

- Organize a drive to collect items for the homeless in your community. You can collect jackets, shoes, clothes, books, or other items that would be appropriate.
- Invite a peer educator into you community to present a program on safe sex. Be sure to have them include information about sexually transmitted diseases and prevention as well as the emotional issues tied to having sex. To help market the program, create a bulletin board with some of this information to get people thinking and talking.
- Design a “Broadway to Film/Film to Broadway” theme week or month and show movies that started out on stage and were made into movies or vice versa. Discuss the challenges in telling the story in each genre. You can kick off this thematic program with a bulletin board and you can ask your students to submit their favorite suggestions to add to the board. Taking this a step further, coordinate a trip to the theatre if there is a local performance in town or on campus.
- Create a Video Yearbook for your community. Record all the seasons of the year, edit it, put it to music and make copies for each of your students. Need help? Ask your students to donate video and help with the editing.
- Invite a speaker in to give information that will create awareness and discussion about Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Queer, Intersexual, and Asexual issues. If there is a Safe Zones program on your campus, they might be a great resource to seek out.

An important consideration in choosing any facilitation option is that all students have an opportunity to participate. Be aware that many of the topics addressed in the film are not often talked about in public settings. Students who attend the program may have varying degrees of comfort level with the discussion.

ISSUES

DIVERSITY
DRUGS AND ALCOHOL
GRIEF AND LOSS
LIFE STORIES,
PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT
PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

RENT

Discussion Questions:

- What themes and important messages did you find in the movie?
- How does the music impact the movie and help tell the story?
- For those of you who saw the stage version and the movie, which did you like better and why?
- Discuss the various friendships that exist in this movie? How do they help and support one another? How do they hurt one another? Do you have friends like them? What qualities do you look for in a friend? What kind of friend are you?
- Discuss the benefits and challenges of the relationships that exist between the following couples: Roger and Mimi, Tom and Angel, and Maureen and Joanne?
- What were the components of community that were shown by this group of friends?
- What are the top five things that are most important to you in a life partner? Now choose three of the five. Discuss the rationale behind your choices.
- How did Benny's marriage change his friendship with the others in the group? What types of things can cause friendships to change over time?
- Can money change people's principles? How did money change Benny?
- Benny, Mark and Roger had a goal of creating a Cyber Studio. However, Mark and Roger decided on different priorities than Benny. Please discuss why those differences may have occurred.
- In what ways are you helping others in your life right now? If you are not, where can you start?
- What is the importance of volunteering to help people who are homeless or have low incomes? How can you help?
- Why is it important that we not judge others? Do we ever really understand what is going on in the lives of others? How are we to treat others who have different life circumstances?
- What are the benefits for members attending the life support group? Do you believe support groups can help people through life's challenges? Why or why not?
- Was it a good idea for Mark to help Maureen after she dumped him? Can people who have dated remain friends after a break up? Is it a good idea? Why or why not?
- Did Joanne have a reason to be jealous of Maureen? How can jealousy effect a relationship?
- Was Mark selling out when he accepted the job with Buzzline? Why or why not?
- If you could create a title for the movie Mark is creating throughout the movie, what would you call it?
- If you set out to write one great song, what story would you want to tell?
- What attracts people to drugs? How can students avoid getting involved with drugs?
- What is the difference between a habit and addiction? How might you tell the difference? How can addiction impact one's life? What makes an addiction so hard from which to recover? What do you think it take to recover from an addiction? How can you help someone who is struggling with an addiction?
- Why does Mark ignore the phone calls from his parents? How do you treat your loved ones when they attempt to be a part of your life?
- How was Roger handling the grief caused by the suicide of his girlfriend? Is that a good way to handle grief? What is a good way to handle grief? Does everyone handle grief in the same way? How would you help someone close to you cope with a loss? What do you think would help you most if you lost someone close to you?
- How do you think Angel maintained such a positive attitude and was so giving of all he earned when he had his own challenges in life? How can you keep a positive attitude and desire to help others when challenges come in to your path?
- How was everyone impacted by the death of Angel? How would you want those around you to remember you when you die? What things would you like them to say about you?
- What is really important to you in life? How are you making those things a priority in your life? Is there anything you can do to make them a higher priority if needed?
- 525, 600 minutes measures one year. Is one year a long time? Explain why or why not?
- Discuss the significance of the following songs in the movie and in your life:
 - "No Day But Today"
 - "I'll Cover You"
 - "Seasons of Love"