

# Movie Discussion Guide

## Ray

*"The extraordinary life story of Ray Charles. A man who fought harder and went farther than anyone thought possible."*

The story of an American Icon. Ray Charles Robinson went from his Southern Gospel roots to being an international music phenomenon. When Ray Robinson begins his career he exploits his ability to mimic the current hit makers. When a friend convinces him he needs to find his own voice and rise above the crowd, Ray Charles emerges with and energy unseen in his day. Never letting his blindness hold him back, Ray Charles became one of the most widely know musicians in the world while dealing with his own personal demons.



© Universal City Studios, Inc.

## Programming Suggestions

This discussion guide is designed to facilitate educational programs after viewing the film RAY. 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:

- Twice during the movie Ray said he/people loved country music because of the stories. Do you agree with his description? Pick various types of music and discuss why the group thinks these types of music are popular.
- Work with Disability Support Services to have several differently-abled persons do a presentation to the group about how they deal with the daily routines of life. They can share how they get around, how they deal with situations we would consider commonplace like preparing meals.
- Much of Ray's music was considered to be racy or overtly sexual at the time. Invite a representative from the music department to play music from various time periods that were politically incorrect at the time and compare these works to contemporary music that might be considered politically incorrect.
- Ray was very confident of himself and his abilities. Coordinate a series of events such as team and confidence builders to help students hone their skills. The Counseling Office or Professional Staff can help you identify activities and possibly even participate in the event as an observer/expert.

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.

RAY

## ISSUES

DIVERSITY / MULTICULTURALISM  
DRUGS/ALCOHOL  
RELATIONSHIPS

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

## Respond to these quotes:

- “Always remember your promise to me. Never let nobody or nothin’ turn you into no cripple.” Ray’s Mother
- “Scratch a lie, find a thief.” Ray’s mother
- “I might be blind, but I ain’t stupid!” Ray
- “I hear like you see.” Ray
- “God gave you the gift to sound like anyone you please, including yourself.” Della Bea
- “How could I pity someone I admire?” Della Bea
- “A black man is a boy in Mississippi.” Quincy Jones
- “I’m a part of you.” Ray’s mother
- “You got strong alright. Went places I never dreamed of. But you still became a cripple.” Ray’s mother

## Discuss what you liked or disliked about these characters:

Ray’s Mother	Ray	Della Bea	Oberon	Marlene
Jeff	Ahmet	Margie	Joe	Dr. Hacker

## Stereotyping

- What scenes in the movie showed people underestimating Ray because he was blind? What advantage, if any, did this give Ray? When has someone underestimated you and it worked to your advantage?
- Throughout his life Ray seemed to always be able to simply adapt to each new situation. Do you think the way he handled his blindness attributed to this flexibility? Why? Are you able to adapt to situations? What lessons can you take from Ray?
- Many people throughout his life used Ray’s talents to better their situation and cheated him out of his due (Marlene, band leaders, etc.). Yet, Ray seemed to bump into people who helped him out (Quincy, Oberon, etc.). Who have you met in your life who were harmful or helpful to you and your aspirations? Have you ever seen someone mistreat someone else? Did you help the victim or stay out of it? How did your position make you feel? How would you handle a situation in the future?
- We saw Ray’s mother standing up for herself with her business partner. How do you think this and other shows of his mother’s strength helped him in life? What have you learned from your parents? Family? Friends?
- How did the scene in Augusta, GA when the young man convinced Ray not to play the gig make you feel? Do you think Ray did the right thing? What did you think of the various headlines? What was your reaction to his being banned in Georgia and how did you feel at the end when the ban was rescinded?

## Drugs

- Why did Ray start using heroin? From what was he trying to escape? Did it provide him the escape he sought?
- Why did Ray put his family and career at risk to continue using heroin?
- What did you think about Della Bea’s reaction to the heroin? Do you think she should have handled it differently? Why do you think she handled it the way you she did by simply telling him not to bring it home? How would you have handled it?
- Do you think Ray honestly believed he could stop using heroin anytime he wanted? What did you think of the scenes when he was in rehab?
- Why did Ray not want Margie to do drugs? Why did he cry when she died? Did he blame himself? Did Della Bea blame him?
- When Ray was arrested in Indianapolis the police handled the situation in a way that today would be considered highly unethical. Put the situation in its historical context and discuss why the police did what they did. Then discuss how it would be handled today.

## Relationships

- Why did Ray’s mother feel it was so important for Ray and his brother to get an education? Did she see it as a way out of the South? A way out of poverty? Did she see it as a right or a responsibility? Why?
- Ray’s mother set rules about how she was going to help Ray deal with his blindness. Why did she stand by them? Did you think they were harsh? Do you think it was hard for her to see him fall and not be able to help? Did you see her as brave? Could you have done what she did? How would you have handled it?
- If Ray loved Della Bea, why then did he have an affair? What did the affair do to their relationship? Why did she stay with him?
- How could Ray keep his private life with Della Bea insular from his public/work life? How do you think this separation helped their relationship? Harmed it?
- What did it mean to Margie to have a baby with Ray? What did it mean to Ray? To Della Bea?
- Why did Jeff stand by Ray as long as he did? What was his relationship with Ray and Della Bea? Did he believe in Ray? Who has stood by you? Why do they stand by you? How do you define friendship?
- Della Bea tells Ray he loves his music more than her or the babies. What did this confrontation do to Ray? What life altering events have you experienced?

## Music

- How did Ray see Music? How did those perceptions help him succeed?
- Ray says people love Country Music because of the stories. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
- Why did Ray mimic other musicians? Why did it take him so long to find his own voice? Do you feel you have found your own voice? What caused the change?
- What did you think of the way Ray wrote “What’d I Say” and other songs?