

Developmental Program Guide

Seabiscuit

“A long shot becomes a legend.”

Here is the true story of the racehorse Seabiscuit who captured the imagination of the American public in the 1930's. This film follows the imperfect owner, trainer, and jockey who struggle against all odds to restore pride and purpose to themselves and the American people.



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Programming Suggestions

This developmental guide is designed to facilitate educational programs after viewing the film SEABISCUIT. 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:

- Host a discussion with a member of the History department faculty on the impact of the Great Depression on America, particularly the area surrounding your campus.
- “It was the beginning and end of imagination all at the same time.” This quote was used in the film with regard to the invention of the assembly line. How might this statement also apply to the technological inventions of the late 20th century? Invite faculty and staff members from Information Technology, Campus Ministry, Philosophy, and Psychology to provide viewpoints and reflections on the topic.
- A major theme of the film is recovery from tragedy and misfortune. Working with representatives from your Campus Counseling Center, present ideas and strategies for students seeking to overcome negative events in their own life. Focus on how those experiences can be incorporated into a stronger and healthy lifestyle.
- As a child, Red Pollard recites the line “We never know how high we are until we are called to rise.” Use this line as the basis to discuss academic standards at your institution. Focus on the qualifications and standards that promote the excellence and development of individual students. Does your campus community feel “called to rise?”

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

CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES
HISTORICAL EVENTS
LEADERSHIP
MENTAL ILLNESS / STRESS / DISABILITIES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Choices and Consequences

- What things stood in Charles Howard's way of fulfilling his goals? How have you overcome obstacles in your life to achieve your goals?
- How did Red, Charles Howard, and Tom Smith come to be men again?
- Tom Smith makes two very powerful statements. "Every horse is good for something" and "Don't throw a whole life away just cause it's banged up a little." How do those statements relate to the following characters?

Seabiscuit

Charles Howard

Red Pollard

Tom Smith

Leadership

- Could you identify with Charles Howard when he remarked "someone needs to make a better spoke?" How?
- What techniques did Charles Howard use to learn about the automobile? How did those same techniques reveal themselves when it came to horse racing? What techniques do you use to learn about something new?
- How would you describe Charles Howard's initial attempts at success in the West?
- What is symbolic of Howard's conversion of the stalls to cars from horses when he buys the farm in California? How does that symbolism change later in the film when Howard changes them back?
- Describe the relationship between jockeys Red Pollard and George Wolf.
- How would you describe the leadership style of trainer Tom Smith?

Historical Events

- Describe the impact of the assembly line process on America? What impact did it have on the mentality of American workers coming out of the Great Depression?
- What is meant by the thought that "it was the beginning and end of imagination all at the same time"?
- What impact did the automobile engine have on the American culture?
- How did trainer Tom Smith's opinion of America's westward expansion compare with that of Charles Howard?
- The film states that the Great Depression causes a "new definition of home" for many Americans. At the end of film, how would Charles Howard, Red Pollard, and Tom Smith define home?
- How did the American people come to have a sense of pride again?

Stress

- How did Red react to the disruptions of his childhood?
- Did Red benefit from the separation with his parents? Why or why not?
- If you were the parents of Red Pollard, would you have given him over to a life of riding horses?
- How did the tragedy in Charles Howard's life affect his first marriage? How about his second?
- How did Seabiscuit learn how to be a horse again?
- What events in the life of Red Pollard prepared him for the adversity of riding Seabiscuit?
- How are Red Pollard and Seabiscuit emotionally connected?