

# Teaching Tips/Notes



## Use of Movies to Teach a Leadership Lesson

### Introduction

Concepts of leadership can be learned in many ways. Students benefit from diverse approaches that appeal to a variety of learning styles. One of the most successful ways that I have used to apply leadership lessons learned in the classroom is “Leadership at the Movies.” I use a variety of movies to challenge students, challenging students to critically apply a wide variety of leadership lessons. Lessons can range from individual skill techniques to the application of values and character traits in effective leadership. Movies can depict leaders in formal leadership roles, such as President Kennedy in “Thirteen Days” to informal leadership roles such as Andy Dufresne in “The Shawshenk Redemption.”

Using movies to enhance leadership lessons offers many benefits to the learning process. First, movies appeal to a younger audience accustomed to television/digital images. Movies provide an opportunity for self-paced or online learning (it is not necessary to utilize formal class-time for movies that are accessible for home-based viewing). Movies can provide a broader or different perspective of leadership that may engage student deeper and challenge them to apply course concepts at a higher level.

### Sample Movies

#### **Appollo 13 (PG)**

Jim Lovell (Tom Hanks), plays the leading character in this film about a crew of astronauts dealing with an explosion on their craft in outer-space. Lessons such as team work, communication, problem solving, and dealing with chaos are evident through this film. Lovell uses calm and creative leadership to deal with a challenging situation and focus his team to use its resources to address problems and arrive safely back at Earth.

Sample Application/Discussion Questions:

1. How does Lovell establish himself as a leader of his crew?
2. How does Lovell address adversity/chaos during the flight?
3. What techniques does Lovell use to unite his team as a leader?

#### **Shawshenk Redemption (R)**

Andy Dufresne is wrongly convicted of murdering his wife and sentenced to the Shawshenk Prison system. Best for mature audiences, this movie is an excellent example of establishing a vision, positive thinking, and fortitude. Dealing with exceptional personal hardships through his prison sentence, Andy perseveres and reaching persona success and challenging others along the way to seek positive outcomes and thrive against all odds.

Sample Application/Discussion Questions:

1. Andy assumes an “informal” leadership role at Shawshenk Prison, how does that happen?
2. In what ways did Andy approach his stay at Shawshenk differently than most other inmates?
3. What are some examples of ways that Andy had positive impacts on others through his actions or decisions as a leader?

#### **Patch Adams (PG13)**

“Patch Adams” is based on a true story, of a doctor that doesn’t follow the expected protocol, nor “fits the mold” of a typical doctor. An inspiration story of a many that overcomes adversity, challenges, and road blocks to success, this story combines humor and drama to teach valuable lessons. This films

are useful to represent topics such as “challenging the process,” “leading with heart,” and “servant leadership.”

Sample Application/Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways did Patch approach life/medicine differently than other medical students?
2. Why did Patch face challenges/road blocks along with way as he worked to achieve goals/make change?
3. How did Patch overcome obstacles to make change and impact others?

### **Amish Grace (NR)**

Focused on the power of “forgiveness,” this movie is also an excellent tool to highlight concepts such as cultural understanding and diversity. Based on a true story in Nickel Mines, PA, an Amish community deals with the impacts of a shooting at an Amish school house where a man fatally shoots five Amish girls before taking his own life. Miraculously the parents of those that lost children in the shooting convey a true sense of forgiveness to the perpetrator’s widow and rely on their faith to move forward and accept the power of forgiveness.

Sample Application/Discussion Questions:

1. To what extent, did the Amish families deal with the shooting situation differently than how we would expect non-Amish?
2. Why do the Amish embrace forgiveness in the manner that they do?
3. How can we apply the concept of forgiveness to those serving in leadership roles?

### **Remember the Titans (PG)**

Set in 1971 in Virginia, Herman Boone is an African-American Football coach at TC Williams High School in their first season as a racially mixed school system and football team. Coach Boone uses a relentless positive attitude, drive and determination, and role modeling to drive change in this community. Overcoming extreme resistance and challenges, Boone was able to unify the team and town to rally behind the football program. Lessons in this movie range from challenging the process and establishing a vision to overcoming adversity and prejudice, this movie is an appealing movie for many audiences and topics.

Sample Application/Discussion Questions:

4. What were the challenges and obstacles that Coach Boone faced as the new football coach at TC Williams High School?
5. What approaches did he use to deal with problems/issues?
6. How was Coach Boone able to overcome challenges and unite the community behind the football program?

### **Conclusion**

Movies can be effective instructional tools for a wide variety of leadership lessons. Entertaining visual displays along with discussion, application, and interaction can make for a powerful and enjoyable learning approach. It is important to engage students in discussion or reflective writing to encourage deeper understanding of concepts and lessons.

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