

SKILLS: CRAFTS

Filmmaking



PURPOSE

To engage a boy's creativity and help him pursue any potential interests in telling stories through film in a godly way.

LEARNING

1. It's been referred to by some as the battle for the mind. Between smart/video phones, computers, video games, television and the Internet, we are constantly being bombarded with media. The Bible warns that we shouldn't "conform to the pattern of this world" and that "bad company corrupts good character." The choices we make when it comes to what media we allow into our lives is a battle and critical to building a Christlike life. Media in and of itself isn't bad. If you have boys who are really interested in producing movies or other media it's okay to encourage them. As with many technologies, media can be used for bad as well as good, so it is very important that everyone learns how to guard against the bad.

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel fell prey, over and over, to the social/religious norms of the pagan people who lived around them. Again and again the Lord had to discipline His people to get them to listen to Him and to worship the one true God.

How do we fight this constant threat of corrupting media? The Bible says we should think about "such things" — things that are noble, right, pure, lovely, etc. And what is a good source of these things? God's Word! Talk about personal devotions often with your boys. Pound it in!

And speaking of God's Word, how does the Bible say Jesus handled media? Media? Jesus didn't have television, cell phones, video games and such. No, but the media of His day was storytelling. There is every indication that the Jews and all other peoples of the world in His day loved a good story. So what did Jesus do? He used the media. He told great stories (parables) with messages about what is noble, pure, and lovely.

So if you have boys who are interested in media, challenge them to be the next great media men of today and use the template set out by Jesus — parables.

2. Movie making for the general public is a very complex business involving many people. The actors are only a small number of the people involved. There are hundreds of support staff working together to make a movie. Outside the actual filming of the movie you have producers, managers, writers, composers, casting, designers, advertisers, lawyers, editors, and distributors. During the filming itself you have people to handle direction, cameras, lighting, art direction, sound, costumes, make-up, sets, props, stunts, special effects, catering, and many more.

The three stages of movie making are:

- a. Pre-production: preparing to make the movie
 - b. Production: filming the movie
 - c. Post-production: finishing the movie
3. *Producer*: gets funding for the film and runs the production office that makes the budget, schedule, and gathers cast, crew, and equipment.

Director: leads the creative side of the process. Primarily works with actors and the director of photography.

Writer: works with Producer and Director to make a script.

Casting director: looks for actors/actresses who will work well in the written roles.

4. *Director of photography*: DP works with the camera and lighting crews to direct how the movie looks.

Gaffer: in charge of the lighting crew.

Assistant director: AD keeps the shot list and the schedule for filming. Calls out instructions on set.

Actor/Actress: plays the part of the script in front of the camera.

Boom operator: holds the microphone to capture dialogue on set.

Prop master: in charge of providing and keeping track of props for filming.

5. *Editor*: assembles the various filmed shots into the final cut.

Sound designer: adds sound effects and music and sets the volume of all the sound, including dialogue.

Distributor: makes sure that the movie gets in the hands of the theaters and eventually made into DVDs or On Demand downloads for retail sales.

6. *Blocking*: planning what lines will be delivered where and how the actors will move.

Rehearsal: practicing lines, blocking, and camera positions.

Filming: recording footage in the order of the AD's shot list. The AD marks the good takes with a circle.

7. *Capturing*: getting footage from the camera to the computer.

Trimming shots: adjusting the length of the shots and assembling them in a time line.

Background music: music track is added and the volume of all of the different sounds is set.

Titles: credits on the beginning and end are added as still images in the time line.

8. Movies are often classified so that movie goers will have an idea of what the subject will be and how the movie will affect the audience. For instance: if the movie is classified (it's genre) as a comedy, then the viewers will know that the movie is designed to make the audience laugh.

Below is a list of six of the more popular movie genres. There are many more genres and sub-genres, but the list given here will help the boys get the general idea. The first five fit into the larger category of fictional movies. Fictional means that the story line depicts people and events that are made up. Sometimes the story will be based on real historical events, but the specific actions of the characters are just the writer's ideas as to what a character might do in that situation. The last category is documentary (nonfiction, or true story).

It is important to remember that most movies are a blend of genres. Dramatic movies may have small segments that make you laugh, and comedies may have parts that make you cry, but usually you can say that a movie, overall, fits a specific category.

Comedy: The main emphasis is on humor, either "slapstick"/physical comedy where a person's actions or situations are humorous or verbal comedy where the humor is in the dialog between characters and sometimes both types of comedy are used.

Drama: Depends mostly on in-depth development of fictional, but realistic, characters dealing with emotional themes.

Mystery: Focuses on the efforts of a detective, private investigator, or amateur sleuth to solve the mysterious circumstances of a crime by means of clues, investigation, and clever deduction.

Science Fiction: Science-based depictions of phenomena that are not necessarily accepted by mainstream science, such as extraterrestrial life forms, alien worlds, extra-sensory perception, and time travel, often along with futuristic elements such as spacecraft, robots, or other technologies.

Action/Adventure: Action/adventure movies are high energy, keep you on the edge-of-your-seat type movies. They often include physical stunts and chases, rescues, battles, fights, escapes, destructive crises (floods, explosions, natural disasters, fires, etc.), and non-stop motion all in dramatic settings from anywhere in the world.

Documentary: A film intended to document some aspect of reality, for example, following a real person, typically a person with a special gift or some important status, as they go about their daily routine.

What follows in this counselor manual is some very basic information on the movie making process. The *Media-Tech Guide Trails Guidebook* (Product No. 3011) from the Calvinist Cadet Corps is an excellent resource on all things related to media, and don't forget the Internet and your public library. Internet sites such as videomaker.com offer some great video tutorials in their tips and tricks section.

Key Components to Make Your Movie

- a. Write a script for your movie.
- b. Create a story board for your movie.
- c. Shoot your movie.
- d. Edit your movie and add a sound track.
- e. Show your movie.

Scripting and Storyboarding

For the simple type of movies that the boys would create for this badge, a very detailed script may not be necessary. An outline of a story and suggested dialog (allowing the actors to improvise) may be sufficient. If the movie is a documentary, then an action plan — a list of settings where you intend to shoot, how you intend to shoot in each setting, and what questions you would like to ask the participants — will be acceptable. If the movie makers choose to have actors and dialog that is critical to a specific story line, then the script becomes very important and should be well developed and the dialog memorized by the actors before shooting begins.

Storyboarding is a very important part of creating a movie because it helps the movie maker visualize the action and scenery that is laid out in the outline or script. Novice movie makers will often want to jump right into shooting scenes for their movie and skip this all-important planning phase. Don't let them do that! Storyboarding is a way to organize your production and get a sense of how your ideas will work before actually shooting the movie. It involves drawing a still image of what each scene will look like. The drawing doesn't have to look like a finished illustration. A crude rendering of the scene will do (people can be stick figures). A series of these still images, one for each scene, will end up looking like a comic strip. With the movie laid out this way, the boys will have something to reference when they are ready to shoot. The storyboard will help them know what props they need to get, what the background scenery should be, where the actors should stand and where they need to move, and many other important details.

Shooting Your Movie

Camera Skills

The first rule is to make sure you are very familiar with your camera before attempting to use it to shoot a movie. It is important that the operation of the camera becomes second nature. Have the boys practice shoot with a friend. They can take turns with the camera — shooting from different angles and at different distances. Practice zooming and panning (see next page).

DOING

1. Although the commercial movie industry is big business involving hundreds of people, it doesn't mean that an individual (with the help of a few friends) can't create a good movie. It may not be the quality needed for showing in a theater, but it can be a great learning experience and a lot of fun. With some modest equipment and movie editing software, you can be well on your way toward making a movie.

A common mistake for beginners is not supporting the camera correctly so that their shots are not steady. The professionals' trick is to hold the camcorder in both hands at eye level, tuck your arms in and touch your elbows together firmly, bracing your elbows against your rib cage, and then spread your feet apart at least shoulder width. This creates a very stable stance for steady video images. And wherever possible find objects to brace yourself against, like leaning against a wall or tree.

Panning: A shot in which a stationary camera turns horizontally, revealing new areas. When hand-holding the camera, the best method is to stand facing straight at where you want the pan shot to end, using the technique for stability described above. Then twist your body to the direction you want the shot to begin. Your shot will begin where your torso is twisted. You start recording and slowly turn to where your torso is in a natural position.

Zooming: Almost all video cameras (with the exception of phone cameras) have a zoom lens which is capable of changing focal lengths. A wide angle focal length is able to take in more area that is in front of the camera whereas a telephoto focal length narrows down the viewing area and makes your subject appear closer. A zoom shot changes the focal length while recording — changing from wide-angle to telephoto (zoom in) or telephoto to wide-angle (zoom out).

Most novice movie makers pan and zoom too rapidly. If the boys have decided to use pans and zooms in their movie, have them do these shots at several different speeds. Chances are that when they view their footage of the pans and zooms they will find that the slower speeds seem more natural.

Camera Angles

The boys should know these basic camera placements and what affect they have on the audience.

High Angle: The camera is placed above and looks down on the subject or object.

Affect: It is used to make the character look small and also indicate that the character is weak or inferior.

Eye Level: An eye angle places the audience on eye-level with the character.

Affect: It is used to indicate that the character is on equal footing with the audience. It suggests reality.

Low Angle: The camera is placed looking up on the subject or object.

Affect: It is used to make the character look big and indicates that the character is powerful and dominant.

Overhead/Bird's Eye: The camera is placed overhead or directly above the object or scene.

Affect: Characters and objects are made to look small and vulnerable. A character or object could be followed at a different speed or pace.

Camera Distance

Extreme Close-up: This is a very close shot showing the detail of an object or the physical features of a person.

Affect: To make the viewer aware of some specific detail in the film. It can be used to heighten tension.

Close-up: This is a shot taken of a person's head from just above the head to the top of the upper chest. It can also be used to film an object at close range. It contains little or no background.

Affect: This used to introduce a character and allows the character to show emotions. It can be used to heighten tension.

Medium Shot: This shows half of the body. The shot is taken from above the head to just below the waist.

Affect: This allows you to get to know the character more closely by viewing their facial expressions and body language.

Long Shot: This shows the whole person and other characters, but the background dominates the shot.

Affect: This allows the viewer to understand the relationship between the characters and their environment.

Extra Long Shot: This shows the landscape of the film or a barely visible character in the distance of a background.

Affect: This gives information to the viewer about where the action is to take place. It often sets the atmosphere of a movie.

Equipment/Software

A computer, a digital video camera, and video editing software are the three key items needed to create a movie. If you or your family do not own these items check with your local schools, library, or community college to see if they loan video cameras and if a video editing station (computer and software) may be available for use.

There are three other items (in order of desirability) that are important for quality movie production, but not absolutely necessary.

Tripod: Camera shake or rapid movement is very distracting to the viewer. The best way to solve that problem is to place your camera on a tripod. Make sure the tripod is designed for video cameras and not for still cameras.

Auxiliary Lighting: Having the subject of a movie hiding in the shadows can be frustrating to the viewer. Lighting sets the mood for a movie, so if it is possible to get at least a small movie light that attaches to the camera or even better, a couple of photo lights that you can place off to the side of the subject, it provides a real professional look to a movie.

Off Camera Microphones: If there are a lot of speaking parts in the movie, it is best to have a microphone that can be held near the subject or hidden on the subject so that the dialog can be heard clearly.

Editing Your Movie

One's effectiveness in editing a movie depends on the speed and capacity of the computer, the quality of the editing software, and, of course, the knowledge and capabilities of the editor. As far as making sure the hardware and software are suited for a movie making project, the best advice is to find a trusted media expert and discuss what needs to be accomplished with the movie project so it can be determined whether the boys have the computer and software to do the job. Remember, local schools and community colleges often have these resources available for a nominal fee. Training to use the software often is as simple as working through the tutorial CD that comes with the software or searching for online resources.

The difference between an effective video and a boring video is tight editing. This means that you only keep information in the movie that is essential to the story. For example: the lead character in the movie gets a phone call that his/her child has been in an accident and is at the hospital. You can have a shot of the lead character getting the call and having a look of shock and anxiety on his/her face, then a shot of him/her running to the closet for a coat, dashing out the front door to the car parked on the street, the car speeding down the road and around the corner, the car screeching to a halt at the entrance to the hospital and the character jumping out, and finally, rushing to the bedside of the child. Tight editing means you would go right from the phone call to the lead character rushing to the bedside. There may be a lot of nice footage of all these pieces of action, but as an editor you have to make tough choices — what really needs to be shown for the audience to understand the message of the movie.

Another part of editing is creating the transitions between shots. Movie editing software often comes with lots of fancy transitions like one shot spinning into the next or the first shot breaking into pieces to reveal the

next. These transitions are all great fun and cool looking, but the movie editor has to ask whether this transition really adds to the feeling of the movie or distracts from it. More often than not the fancy transitions are a distraction. The use of cuts (one shot ends and the next begins immediately) and dissolves (where the first shot fades into the next) will be your primary transitions.

2. It is important to understand that people who appear in a movie have rights that must be honored, and the movie maker must have permission for any music or products that appear or are heard in the movie. If people appear in the movie that are outside the movie maker's regular group of friends or family, it is important to have them sign a release form. Samples of these forms can be found on the Internet. A signed form shows that the movie maker has the right to use the image or voice of those who are in the movie and allows the persons in the movie understand that their image is being used in this way.

Also, if there is music as part of the sound track that is something other than what the boys composed and performed themselves, they must make sure they have permission to use that music or sound effect. Often the people who own the rights to the music will not charge the movie maker for the use of the music if the movie is not being used commercially (for profit) and only shown to family and friends, but it is still important to obtain permission. If the movie will be posted on the Internet, permission for use of the music is absolutely necessary.

A good source for music for movie productions are on-line stock music companies. They offer "royalty free" music clips. For a flat fee, the movie maker can use the music or sound effects anywhere in the movie, and the movie can be shown in any venue as many times as desired without any further fees. Stock music companies have extensive collections of music and sound effects that can be sampled online. If the music seems appropriate for the movie, it can be downloaded for immediate use.