

## PRACTICE TOPIC: SEX AND VIOLENCE IN THE MOVIES

Both Bob Dole and Bill Clinton made sex and violence in the media an important issue in their 1996 presidential campaigns, and the issue remains important in the 2000 election. Concern about sex and violence on TV and in the movies is not new. In 1930, faced with threats of censorship by the federal government, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America created the Movie Production Code, also called the “Hayes Code,” after Will H. Hayes, the organization’s first director. Here are some quotes from the Hayes Code:

No picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience shall never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.

The technique of murder must be presented in a way that will not inspire imitation. Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail.

Adultery and illicit sex, sometimes necessary plot material, must not be explicitly treated or justified, or presented attractively. . . . Excessive and lustful kissing, lustful embraces, suggestive postures and gestures are not to be shown.

Complete nudity is never permitted. This includes nudity in fact or in silhouette. . . . Undressing scenes should be avoided, and never used save where essential to the plot.

Details of crime must never be shown and care should be exercised at all times in discussing such details. . . . There must be no scenes, at any time, showing law-enforcing officers dying at the hands of criminals.

In 1968, the Hayes Code was replaced by a rating system similar to that in effect today. The Hayes Code was designed to make **all** films suitable for **any** audience. The new rating system was designed to restrict children and adolescents from seeing “mature” films.

In a well-organized essay, answer the following question:

**In your opinion, do sex and violence in movies and television, even under our current rating system, have a harmful effect on our society? If so, what should be done about it? Should we return to something like the Hayes Code? If not, why not?**

In supporting your view, you may want to describe movies you have seen and your reaction to them, or the reactions of others. You may also want to suggest changes in the rating system, or a new movie production code. Another approach would be to describe policies about movies and television that exist in another country with which you are familiar.