

**Junior Film Critics Program**  
**Becoming a KIDS FIRST!® Jr. Film Critic**

**SESSION ONE: Becoming a Film Critic - What a Film Critic Does**

**Time:** 60 minutes

**A. Welcome transparency up.**

- Registration and sign in.
- Housekeeping & agenda posted, cover breaks, snacks, bathroom location, no-smoking, confidentiality, etc.

**B. Introductions**

- Facilitator introduces self
- Introduce KIDS FIRST!; show book, web site page (use transparency)
- Participants introduce themselves and say why they came.

**C. What is a Junior Film Critics Program** (use handout)

- Junior Film Critics goals (use transparency)
- How we'll meet them (use transparency)
- Let's Go! A good critic has many opinions, knows their likes and dislikes, and beliefs... and can express their reasons clearly. How about you.

**D. Conduct a personal media survey.**

"Let's see what our personal opinions of media are today. We'll do it again after our last meeting."

**E. Conduct a partner media survey.**

- Use media cards. Now let's compare what we think about media with what others think.
- Find a partner with the same card. Share with each other your thoughts about the topic on the card.
- Write a few on board. Discuss group similarities, differences.

**F. What do you know about film critics?**

- Can you name some film critics? (Leonard Maltin, Kermit, Nick Jr., Rober & Ebert)
- Tell me what you think a film critic does in his or her job. Write on board.
- Use *Film Critic* transparency to compare with kids' input.
- What's in a review? Write input on the board.
- Use *What's in a Review* transparency and compare with kids' ideas.

**G. Media Log**

- Introduce the media log (Use handout) as a weekly record of your viewing habits.

**H. Homework: Volunteer reads assignments**

- Media log.
- Write your first review. Select a program from your media log.
- Focus on who you think would enjoy this program and why.
- Remember . . . 7 Sentences! 1) Briefly describe the story or content. 2) What you liked best and, 3) Why? 4) What you liked the least and, 5) Why! 6) Who you think would enjoy this television program, and 7) Why!

**OPTIONAL: Compare Reviewers.** Look for reviews by different reviewers about a current movie, tv show, or video that's rated for your age. Examine the differences between the reviews, how they each described the program. Which review did you relate to most and why? Watch the program yourself and compare your own thoughts about it with what the pros have said.

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**SESSION TWO: How Media Affect Us** - Inventory Your Own Media Use, What's Real and What's Not

**Time:** 60 minutes

**A. Welcome transparency up.** Sign in.

- Housekeeping & agenda posted, cover breaks, snacks, bathroom location, no-smoking, confidentiality, etc.

**B. Homework Review**

- **Media Log.** Write on board. Share.
- **Give us your first review.** Invite one or two people to share their review with the group. More than one person on the same program is fine. It shows the idea of no right or wrong opinion.

**C. Media Perceptions.** What's real? **(Use Video Clips)**

- Watch the first three video clips. Discuss.
- What was real and what was not real on the clips?
- How did the clips get us to think or feel in a particular way?

**D. "Speaking the Truth"** (Game show format)

- Choose host
- Choose 3 kids to play popular stars as game show contestants.
- Remainder of class is audience.
- After the show, discuss. What did you already know? Were there any surprises? Why?

**E. OPTIONAL.** If kids really enjoy doing the game show, you may want to rehearse it and put it on for parents or community at the close of your final Junior Film Critics session or at your local KIDS FIRST! Film and Video Festival.

**F. Homework:** Have volunteer read assignment to the group.

- Media log. Look for what's real and what's not this week.
- Write your 2<sup>nd</sup> review. Choose another program from your media log. Focus on what's real and what's not. You may include commercials.
- Remember the review rules: 7 Sentences! 1) Briefly describe the story or content. 2) What you liked best and, 3) Why? 4) What you liked the least and, 5) Why! 6) Who you think would enjoy this television program and, 7) Why!

**OPTIONAL:**

Go online and look up [www.slate.com](http://www.slate.com). This is a web site that compares the headline news from five major U.S. newspapers daily in their section called, Today's Papers. You can also subscribe to getting this emailed to you every day. Read what they have to say every day for a week. Ask yourself how the different papers report the news and whether it varies depending on the source. Ask yourself the question, "What is real and what is not as reported in the news? What is the truth?"

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**SESSION THREE: Violence - What is Violence; How Does it Affect Us**

**Time:** 60 minutes

**A. Welcome transparency up.** Sign in.

**B. Review Homework:**

- Media Log. Write on board. Share.
- Give us your 2<sup>nd</sup> Review. Share 2 or 3.

**C. View first example of media violence.** (Batman on video clip reel)

- Discuss. Was it funny? Was it violent? Why? How?

**D. Facilitator reads: What Children Watch.** (Use transparency)

**E. Write on Board: “What is Violence?”**

- Break into groups of four, discuss and list of 10 different violent acts.
- Groups report.
- Compare to *Violence* transparency.

**F. View remainder of examples of violence on video clip reel**

- Discuss. Do you or your friends ever watch programs like these (religious cartoon)
- Do your younger siblings ever watch programs like this (Penguin cartoon)
- Do your older brothers and sisters or parents? (Horror clip)
- Ask. How does Violent Media Affect Us? Refer to transparency: “Ways in Which Media Violence Might Affect Us” for discussion.

**G. What Would Happen If...** Reality Check. Use hand-out.

- Discuss in small groups
- Report back to entire group.

**H. Violent Score Card hand out.**

- Introduce sheet and how to use it.
- Group may score commercials, cartoons, news, sitcoms, dramas, movies.

**I. Homework Assignment:** Volunteer reads assignments.

- Media log.
- Violence score card.
- Write your 3<sup>rd</sup> Review about the one hour you scored for violent content. Focus on violence acts you see. Use violence score card as an aid.
- Remember the review rules: 7 Sentences! 1) Briefly describe the story or content. 2) What you liked best and, 3) Why? 4) What you liked the least and, 5) Why! 6) Who you think would enjoy this television program and, 7) Why?

**OPTIONAL:** Look for reviews by professional reviewers that address the type and amount of violence in the films they’re reviewing. Hint, go online to [www.kidsfirst.org](http://www.kidsfirst.org) or to [www.moviemom.com](http://www.moviemom.com).

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**SESSION FOUR: Gratuitous vs. Non-Gratuitous Violence, Homework Review**

**Time:** 60 Minutes

**A. Welcome transparency up.** Sign in sheet.

**B. Review Homework:**

- Media Log. Write on board. Share.
- Give us your 3<sup>RD</sup> Review. Share 2 or 3.
- Violence scorecard. Discuss. Write on board.
  1. How many violent acts were in one program? Were you surprised?
  2. Did the show seem real or believable?
  3. Can you suggest another way to solve the problems they had other than violence?
  4. Was there music or sound effects to accompany the violence? Describe.
  5. Who was most often involved and in what way? Define them by color, gender, age.
  6. How did you feel after you watched this show?
  7. What age would you recommend watch this show?

**C. Write on board: Gratuitous Violence.** Ask for a definition. Use gratuitous violence transparency

- List examples of gratuitous violence in TV programs you watch.

**D. Write on board: Non-Gratuitous Violence.** Ask for a definition. Use non-gratuitous violence transparency.

**E. Watch the film Kayla: A Cry in the Wilderness** (you'll need to rent or borrow it), or find another example of a film that exemplifies non-gratuitous violence. (Use the KIDS FIRST! website to find one - [kidsfirst.org](http://kidsfirst.org)) Discuss afterwards.

- What was violent? Was the violence important to the story? Was it gratuitous?
- Did it help you understand the character better?
- How did you feel when you watched this show?
- How did you feel afterwards?
- What age would you recommend watch this show?

**I. Homework Assignment:** Volunteer reads assignments.

- Media log. Add one cartoon to what you track this week. Look for gratuitous and non-gratuitous violence. (Use handout for help)
- Write your 4<sup>th</sup> Review. Choose from your media log or write a review on Kayla: A Cry in the Wilderness, or get another recommendation from the KIDS FIRST! website.
- Remember the review rules: 7 Sentences! 1) Briefly describe the story or content. 2) What you liked best and 3) Why. 4) What you liked the least and, 5) Why! 6) Who you think would enjoy this television program and 7) Why

**OPTIONAL:** Use the Internet to research media violence. There are thousands of studies that show a definite link between media violence and violent behavior. See if you can find research that supports both sides of this issue.

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**SESSION FIVE: Stereotypes and Bias - What are they?**

**TIME:** 120 minutes

**A. Welcome transparency up.** Sign in.

**B. Review Homework:**

- **Media Log.** Write on board. Share. Ask if they are watching any new programs. Like what?
- **Give us your 4<sup>RD</sup> Review.** Share 2 or 3.
  - How did you do finding gratuitous and non-gratuitous violence?
  - How many reviewed Kayla? How many looked up a title on the KIDS FIRST! website?
  - Discuss age recommendations for films/shows you watched.

**C. Write: gangster, nerd, rock and roll star, step-mother, prince, mother, father, teacher, Girl Scout**

- Ask kids how they would portray one of the characters on the board if they were a director.
- Write 2 or 3 of them on board. Label them STEREOTYPES
- Ask, "Do all gangster have xxx (one of their attributes)? Do all step-mothers have yyy (use their characteristics)? Do all Girl Scouts have zzz (one of their characteristics)"

**D. Stereotypes... let's find out what they are.**

- Use Stereotype transparency. Compare to kids' ideas.
- Ask, "How can stereotypes hurt our perceptions about people?"
- Talk about the unfairness of judging someone without knowing him or her.
- Refer to "Why Is it Important to Know about Stereotypes."

**E. Bias... let's find out what it is.**

- Use bias transparency
- Ask, "Can you think of any TV show or movie where a character was a victim of bias? Explain."
- Use "Ways to Check for Stereotypes"

**F. View stereotype video clips.** Discuss whether the stereotypes show bias or not.

**G. Watch the film, Shrek or other KIDS FIRST! - endorsed title that addresses stereotypes.**

- Discuss which character are stereotyped. How are they portrayed? (Prince Farquar)
- Which characters are not stereotypes? (Shrek, Princess, Dragon) Explain
- Ask, "If stereotypes are so bad, why are they used in books, movies, tv? Write ideas on board"
- Use Stereotype transparency (2<sup>nd</sup> use) to compare.

**I. Homework Assignment:** Volunteer reads assignments.

- Media log. Look for stereotypes and bias.
- Write your 5<sup>th</sup> Review. Choose from your media log or review Shrek or visit the KIDS FIRST! website and do a search on bias or stereotype and choose.
- Remember the review rules: 7 Sentences! 1) Briefly describe the story or content. 2) What you liked best and 3) Why. 4) What you liked the least and, 5) Why! 6) Who you think would enjoy this television program and 7) Why

**OPTIONAL:** What is media literacy? Search the Internet for the words "media literacy." Look at the research the affect of media on kids. In the media literacy web site, look for what they have to say about bias or stereotypes in the media. Report back to the group on what you found.

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**SESSION SIX: Unsafe Behavior and Put Downs - Examine Behavior Shown in Media**

**Time:** 60 - 120 Minutes

**A. Welcome transparency up.** Sign in.

**B. Review Homework:**

- **Media Log.** Write on board. Share. Ask if they are watching any new programs. Like what?
- **Give us your 5<sup>RD</sup> Review.** Share 2 or 3.
  - How many reviewed Shrek? How many did another title? Like what?
  - Share reviews with group

**C. Unsafe Behavior.** Show clips from clip reel without discussion. Discuss afterwards.

- What actions did you see that were not safe? Why?
- What age group do you think might imitate the unsafe? How about you?
- Have you seen any unsafe behaviors in your media log programs? Describe. Would you imitate them? Would a younger kid imitate them?
- As a film critic would you tell your readers about unsafe behaviors in a film, tv show or video game? Like what?

**C. Put-Downs: Watch clip reel. Show without discussion**

- Let's watch these clips first. Then, we'll discuss them.
- Use Goonies clip on reel.
- Rent and show clips from *Married with Children*, a *Simpsons* episode, or watch entire *Goonies*.

**D. Afterwards ask:**

- How do you think it feels to be made fun of in front of other people?
- How many of you have been put-down by insults or name-calling?
- How does it make you feel? How do you feel when someone says, "It's just a joke?"
- Why do you think people do it?
- Are you ever too old for it to not hurt?
- Have you ever put someone else down?
- Do put-downs belong in children's programming? School? Anywhere?
- Another word for put-downs is condescension. Try using that around your parents!

**I. Homework Assignment:** Volunteer reads assignments.

- Media log. Look for unsafe behavior and put-downs in the 3 cartoons you added two weeks ago.
- Write your 6<sup>th</sup> Review. Choose from your media log or review Goonies or visit the KIDS FIRST! website and do a search on unsafe or condescension.
- Remember the review rules: 7 Sentences! 1) Briefly describe the story or content. 2) What you liked best and 3) Why. 4) What you liked the least and, 5) Why! 6) Who you think would enjoy this television program and 7) Why

**OPTIONAL:** Go online and do a search on condescension or unsafe. What do you find? Try adding the word media, film, or tv show.

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**SESSION SEVEN: Evaluating a Program Using the KIDS FIRST! criteria**

**Time:** 60 minutes

**A. Welcome transparency up.** Sign in sheet.

**B. Review Homework:**

- **Media Log.** Write on board. Share. Ask if they noticed anything new in their own tv interests.
- **Give us your 6<sup>RD</sup> Review.** Share 2 or 3.
  - How many reviewed Goonies? How many did another title? Like what?
  - Share reviews with group

**C. Show the KIDS FIRST! criteria transparency and the KIDS FIRST! evaluation form.** Discuss.

- Ask, "Who knows what evaluation means? (1. To determine or set the value or amount of., 2. To appraise., 3. To Judge according to a standard.)"
- Discuss how KIDS FIRST! uses these criteria to evaluate and endorse films, videos, interactive media and web sites.
- Define appeal, content, production values, benefits
- Have a 3-star KIDS FIRST! rated title available. Let them know we're going to watch it and evaluate it.

**D. Show the All-Star check list.**

- Discuss, "How would you let people know which are the best and which are not?"
- KIDS FIRST! rates them with 1-, 2- or 3-stars to indicate good, better, or best.

**E. Prepare to watch a 3-star KIDS FIRST! rated title.** (Find online) (Loretta Claiborne Story)

- Have volunteer read KIDS FIRST! Junior Film Critics Club evaluation rules prior to watching.
- Use the Coaching sheet to as a guide for leading the evaluation discussion.

**F. Homework Assignment:** Volunteer reads assignments.

- Media log.
- Write your 1<sup>st</sup> solo evaluation. Use the evaluation form and coaching sheet. Choose a program from your media log or KIDS FIRST! website.
- Focus on appeal, story, character behavior, production values, and benefits.
- Remember the evaluation rules: Make notes while you watch. Use complete sentences. Give your reason for your opinion. Use a comment only once. Have fun. Use enthusiasm as you write. And remember, there are no right or wrong opinions.

**OPTIONAL: Share your opinions with your friends.**

Get some of your friends together and go to the movies together, then critique them as a group. Share some of the exercises you've done looking at violence, stereotypes and bias with them so that they're more aware of these in the movie. Encourage everyone to share their point of view and debate the pros and cons of the film.

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**SESSION EIGHT: Rating Yes or No; One-, Two- or Three-stars.**

**Time:** 60 minutes

**A. Welcome transparency up.** Sign in.

**B. Review Homework:**

- **Media Log.** Old programs looking different?
- **Give us your 1<sup>st</sup> solo evaluation.** Share 2 or 3.
  - How did you do on the rules?
  - How about each heading of the form?

**C. Review Evaluation Categories:**

- Appeal, content, production values, benefits.

**D. Review descriptions for rating** a title 1-, 2-, and 3- stars Use transparency

**E. Select a title rated 1-star by KIDS FIRST! to view and evaluate.** Preferably a 30-min. title.

**F. Whole group evaluates it, using KIDS FIRST! evaluation form.**

- Write opinions on board
- Rate it. Refer to Rating Guide sheet.
- See if your rating matches that given by KIDS FIRST!

**G. Homework Assignment:** Volunteer reads assignments.

- Media log.
- Write your 2<sup>nd</sup> solo evaluation. Choose a program from your media log or KIDS FIRST! website. Give handouts of star rating guide to take home.
- Focus on appeal, story, character behavior, production values, and benefits.
- Remember the evaluation rules: Make notes while you watch. Use complete sentences. Give your reason for your opinion. Use a comment only once. Have fun. Use enthusiasm as you write. And remember, there are no right or wrong opinions.
- Prior to this meeting, contact the KIDS FIRST! jury coordinator, Michelle Roybal at KIDS FIRST! and tell her that you'd like to evaluate a title with your club. She can be reached at 505.989.8076 or email jury@kidsfirst.org. Michelle will send you a video, DVD, or CD-Rom in the mail. Allow adequate time for her to ship this to you.
- Or, in lieu of contacting Michelle, a member of the group offers to bring in a video of his/her choice to evaluate and rate next week. It should be only 30 - 45 minutes in length.

**OPTIONAL: Write and produce your own video script.**

Write a short, three minute film or TV program script. Think about how you will shoot it with the camera. Pay attention to camera angles, camera shots - close ups, long shots, and sets. Now video tape it with some of your friends or family. Talk afterwards about what worked and what didn't. What would you do differently the next time?



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**SESSION NINE: Evaluate a program of your choice, either a film, video, videogame, or web site**

**Time:** 60 minutes

**A. Welcome transparency up.** Sign in.

**B. Review Homework:**

- **Media Log.** Any new choices. Old programs looking different?
- **Give us your 2<sup>st</sup> solo evaluation.** Share 2 or 3.
  - Are you writing about your film like no one has ever seen it before?
  - Are you writing in complete thoughts or sentences. Use the back if you need to.

**C. Review**

- The KIDS FIRST! Evaluation form
- Define Evaluation.
- Define Appeal, content, production values, benefits.
- Endorsement criteria
- Rating Guidelines

**D View the new title for this week,** either KIDS FIRST! selected or selected by a member of your group.

- It should be only 30 - 45 minutes in length.
- Evaluate it, KIDS FIRST! use evaluation form.

**E. Homework Assignment:** Volunteer reads assignments.

- Media log.
- Write your 1<sup>st</sup> review that incorporates your evaluation responses from the film watched with the group. . Choose a program from your media log or KIDS FIRST! website. Give handouts of star rating guide to take home.
- Remember the review rules: 7 Sentences! 1) Briefly describe the story or content. 2) What you liked best and 3) Why. 4) What you liked the least and, 5) Why! 6) Who you think would enjoy this television program and 7) Why
- Remember the evaluation rules: Make notes while you watch. Use complete sentences. Give your reason for your opinion. Use a comment only once. Have fun. Use enthusiasm as you write. And remember, there are no right or wrong opinions.

**OPTIONAL Learn about the professionals.**

Visit one of the film critics you studied in exercise one and interview them. Ask them about their job, why they like it, what they feel about the films they watch, why they became a film critic. Visit a video or film editing facility or a local TV station. Spend some time with one of the editors and find out what kind of computer hardware and software they use for editing, how professional equipment differs from home equipment, where they learned how to do their job, and how many different kinds of people it takes to run their business.

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**CloSESSION Ten: Closure and what's next?** How to participate as Juror for KIDS FIRST! or a curator, panelist, or staff for a local KIDS FIRST! Film and Video Festival.

**Time:** 60 minutes

**A. Welcome transparency up.** Sign in

**B. Review Homework:**

- **Media Log.** How would you rate your favorite program? Who is the audience?
- **Give us your 1<sup>st</sup> combined review and evaluation.** Share 2 or 3.

**C. Pass out media survey again.** (Certificates for Adult Facilitators)

This is important in assessing what changes, if any, have the kids made as a result of participating in this program. Send both the pre- and post- media surveys into KIDS FIRST! We will give you a report back after our team has evaluated them.

**D. Pass out Certificates.** Every participant gets one.

**E. Discuss the options facing the group.**

- **Continue meeting on a regular basis.** If you continue to meet, please let the KIDS FIRST! office know.
- **Become a KIDS FIRST! Juror!**  
Evaluate videos, films, and software for KIDS FIRST!  
(contact the KIDS FIRST! Jury Coordinator, Michelle Roybal at [jury@kidsfirst.org](mailto:jury@kidsfirst.org) or call 505.989.8076 for details)
- **Participate in your local KIDS FIRST! Film and Video Festival** as curators, panelists, or volunteers.

**F. Take a group photo.**

**OPTIONAL: Life long learning**

Learn more about careers in film and video - from critics to production. Choose one of the following and find out more about what it takes to do the job, what education you need to do it, and what makes it interesting and challenging.

- \* Film or video critic
- \* Film or video editor
- \* Film or video producer
- \* Film or video writer
- \* Television programmer
- \* Television news anchor
- \* Media researcher

