



Women in Hollywood

Like most of the arts, the film industry has been full of gender bias and inequality for decades. It can be seen in the limited number and types of roles written for women, as well as in the highly sexualized movie posters.

Films reflect the power structure present at the time of making the film. Only 15-20 percent of the top-earning films are written, directed, or produced by women. Without female perspectives in decision-making, women's issues lack a suitable platform in Hollywood and beyond.

Highlighting women's rights is especially important since women's voices are often not heard in their homes either. According to the United Nations, globally, one in five girls is married before the age of 18, limiting their chances to make choices about their current lives and futures. Once married, nearly half of the women worldwide lack decision-making power over their reproductive health and sexual lives. Restricting the roles that women have in Hollywood projects a particular gender stereotype that discourages a reflection of what women could achieve if given proper visibility.

Hollywood needs to provide more opportunities for women, both on and behind the scenes, to break free from its history as a patriarchal machine. Doing so can ultimately influence how women are portrayed and regarded in Hollywood and society.

DO

Movie Poster Updates

In this Maker, you will redesign a historic movie poster to reflect an empowered heroine and a supportive male counterpart. Movie posters from the Golden Age of Hollywood often portrayed scantily clad women running into the arms of a male rescuer.

1. In groups, research a musical, Western, or film noir from the Golden Age that used sexist promotional material.
2. Create several drafts of an updated poster to promote gender equality and discourage gender-based violence. While working, reflect on the messages your posters project.
3. You can formalize a final draft using digital, collage, paint, or lithography materials.
4. Present your posters in class in addition to the originals. Discuss the subtle changes reflected in the new versions.

01 Present!

Once your Maker is done, display your movie posters online or in the hallways of your school. Conduct a contest to decide which reconstructs the gender narrative best.

02 Discuss!

- › What specific roles did women have in making Westerns, musicals, and film noir from the Golden Age?
- › How have women's film roles changed (or not) since then?

03 Get Informed!

Write to Hollywood! Organize an online petition to require more female writers, directors, and producers.

04 Take It on the Road!

Make a list of films that promote discussion about women's societal roles. Organize a film festival in your community to promote the movie. Include a conversation about women's roles afterward.

