

Weekly Passage:

Violence and media: are ratings systems necessary?

The U.S. did not start rating their movies until quite recently. In 1968, the motion picture rating system began rating films for children and adults. Ratings are usually given instead of banning or restricting a film. The use of this system has been a complex issue because of the specific factors involved in deciding a rating, such as sex, violence, and profanity. In the United States, movies in which sexual content occurs are often restricted to older viewers while in countries such as Germany or France this is not such a big deal. However, violent movies receive restrictive ratings or are censored in those countries while in the United States they are not.

Today, video games, books, tv shows, and music also get rated. Those who like the rating system say it helps people decide if a movie is right for them or their children. Parents can tell quickly if a movie might offend them and whether or not it is okay for their children. Parents who are more worried about the moral content of a movie or game, rather than how many times a swear word is used, can use an alternative rating system.

On the other hand, a rating system may be used for maximizing profits rather than protecting the public. Movies rated PG and PG-13 make more money than those rated R and some Hollywood executives lower standards for major movie studios to make sure that the film gets a certain rating. Parents who do not interact with their children or pay attention to their interests may not even know what a certain rating on a video game or book means. Furthermore, a young gamer who is stopped from buying a title because it's "too mature" just needs to have someone older buy it. Making rating systems work is complex.

What do you think about this? Do you think people should be restricted as to what they can buy or see? Are rating systems necessary?

Focus Word Definitions

- » rating - a classification
- » banned - forbidden
- » interact - communicate
- » occur - happen
- » complex - complicated; of many parts