

shape of water parents guide

The Shape of Water Parents Guide

When it comes to cinematic storytelling, few films have received as much acclaim and attention as Guillermo del Toro's "The Shape of Water." Released in 2017, this unique romantic fantasy film blends elements of horror, drama, and science fiction, creating a compelling narrative that captivates audiences. However, like many films that delve into darker themes and complex emotions, "The Shape of Water" raises significant questions for parents contemplating whether it is appropriate for younger viewers. This article serves as a comprehensive parents guide to help navigate the film's content, themes, and messages.

Overview of the Film

Set against the backdrop of the Cold War in 1962, "The Shape of Water" tells the story of Elisa Esposito, a mute woman who works as a janitor in a high-security government laboratory. Her life takes an extraordinary turn when she discovers a mysterious aquatic creature held captive within the facility. As Elisa forms a profound bond with the creature, she becomes determined to save him from the clutches of a cruel government and its military operatives.

Key Themes and Messages

Understanding the themes of the film is crucial for parents when determining its suitability for their children. Here are some of the key themes presented in "The Shape of Water":

1. Love and Acceptance

At its core, "The Shape of Water" is a story about love transcending boundaries. The relationship between Elisa and the creature embodies acceptance and understanding, highlighting the beauty of connection in even the most unconventional circumstances. This theme can be a valuable lesson for viewers regarding empathy and the importance of looking beyond appearances.

2. Isolation and Loneliness

Elisa, along with several supporting characters, experiences profound feelings of isolation. The film explores the emotional landscape of loneliness and the desire for companionship. The portrayal of these feelings can resonate with viewers, fostering discussions about mental health and the importance of human connection.

3. Challenging Authority and Conformity

The film also critiques societal norms and the often oppressive nature of authority. Elisa's defiance against the government's unethical treatment of the creature serves as a metaphor for standing up against injustice, making it a relevant discussion point about moral courage and individual agency.

4. The Otherness of the Creature

The aquatic creature symbolizes the "other," representing those who are marginalized or misunderstood. The film invites viewers to empathize with those who are different and to question societal prejudices. This theme can provide a framework for discussions about diversity and acceptance.

Content Breakdown

To assist parents in evaluating the film, here is a detailed breakdown of its content, including potential triggers or sensitive themes.

1. Violence and Horror Elements

While "The Shape of Water" is not a traditional horror film, it does contain several scenes that may be unsettling for younger viewers:

- Brutality: There are moments depicting the cruelty of the government agents and the mistreatment of the creature.
- Death: The film includes scenes of violence where characters are killed or seriously harmed.
- Tension: The atmosphere can be quite tense, particularly during scenes involving government agents and their threats against the creature.

2. Sexual Content

The film features several intimate scenes, which include:

- Nudity: There are instances of partial nudity, particularly during the more intimate moments between Elisa and the creature.
- Sexual Acts: Some scenes depict sexual intimacy between Elisa and the creature, which may be considered explicit, albeit presented in an artistic and metaphorical manner.

3. Language

"The Shape of Water" contains some strong language, including:

- Profanity: The film features occasional use of strong language, which may not be suitable for younger audiences.
- Racial Slurs: There are instances where derogatory language is used, reflecting the societal attitudes of the time period.

4. Substance Use and Alcohol

Characters in the film engage in:

- Drinking: Some scenes depict characters consuming alcohol, often in a social context.
- Smoking: There are instances of smoking, particularly among adult characters.

Age Appropriateness

Given the film's content and themes, the appropriate age for viewing "The Shape of Water" can vary greatly depending on individual maturity levels and parental discretion. The film is rated R for "sexual content, graphic nudity, violence, and language." Here's a guideline for parents:

Recommended Age: 17 and Up

While the film's storytelling is rich and nuanced, the explicit content and mature themes make it best suited for older teens and adults. Parents may consider the following factors when deciding if their child should watch it:

- Maturity Level: Evaluate if the child can process and discuss the film's complex themes.
- Sensitivity to Content: Consider whether the child is sensitive to violence, horror elements, or sexual content.

Discussion Points for Parents

If parents choose to watch "The Shape of Water" with their older teens, it can serve as a springboard for meaningful conversations. Here are some potential discussion points:

- How does the film portray love in different forms?
- What are the implications of the characters' isolation, and how does it affect their choices?
- Discuss the significance of the creature as a symbol. What does it represent for Elisa and society?

- How does the film challenge traditional narratives around authority and conformity?

Conclusion

"The Shape of Water" is a beautifully crafted film that offers a poignant exploration of love, acceptance, and the human experience. While it is a work of art that can inspire deep reflection and conversation, its mature themes and content warrant careful consideration from parents. By understanding the film's elements and engaging in open discussions, parents can make informed decisions about their children's viewing experiences, ensuring that they are both enriching and appropriate.

Frequently Asked Questions

What age group is 'The Shape of Water' suitable for?

'The Shape of Water' is rated R, which means it is not suitable for children under 17 without an accompanying parent or guardian. The film contains adult themes, nudity, and violence.

What themes are explored in 'The Shape of Water'?

The film explores themes of love, isolation, acceptance, and the struggle against societal norms, making it a complex narrative that may require parental guidance for younger viewers.

Are there any explicit scenes in 'The Shape of Water'?

Yes, 'The Shape of Water' includes scenes of nudity and sexual content, which may not be appropriate for younger audiences.

How does 'The Shape of Water' portray relationships?

The film portrays relationships in a nuanced way, focusing on the bond between the main characters, which challenges conventional ideas of love and connection.

Is 'The Shape of Water' suitable for family viewing?

Due to its R rating, explicit content, and mature themes, 'The Shape of Water' is generally not considered suitable for family viewing, especially with younger children.

What should parents know before watching 'The Shape of Water'?

Parents should be aware that the film contains strong language, sexual content, and violent scenes, so it may not be appropriate for all viewers.

Does 'The Shape of Water' have any positive messages?

Yes, the film conveys positive messages about empathy, understanding, and the importance of embracing differences, which can be valuable discussions for parents and older teens.

What is the overall tone of 'The Shape of Water'?

The film has a dark fairy tale tone, combining elements of romance, fantasy, and drama, which may be better appreciated by mature audiences.

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