

Adoption in the Media and Entertainment: Books, Television, and Movies

Adoption takes on many different meanings depending on how adoption is portrayed and how it's perceived by people. Media—including books, television, movies, songs, and news articles—often plays a significant role in how we shape our opinions how it impacts our lives.

Unfortunately, mass media may not always provide a positive or even accurate message about adoption. As an adoptive parent, you can use the media to your advantage, by talking about specific movies, books, or news articles with your children. There are tools that may give you and your family opportunities for valuable discussions.

Following are some recommendations to get you started in thinking about media and adoption.

Books

When children are toddlers and preschool age, parents often look to children's books that offer positive and uplifting stories on adoption.

These storybooks provide gentle approaches that often focus on a family's love for their child and have entertaining ways of explaining the journey of adoption.

If you have older children, consider reading pre-school age books (or have them read the books to younger kids). They often take comfort in these stories and may have missed out on them in their earlier years.

Some books focus more on diversity within a family as well as the roles of family members. Identifying roles can be very helpful for children whose birth relatives are still part of their lives and it often helps kids to feel like they're not the only one in a particular situation.

Television and Movies

When children become school-aged, they start to gain an understanding of what adoption means in their lives. TV and movies can provide great opportunities for you and your children to have discussions about adoption.

As mentioned previously, many stories portrayed on TV and in the movies can be inaccurate or carry a very negative tone. It's good to be as informed as possible about the TV shows and movies your children are and could be watching. You may want to screen movies, books, and

television programs ahead of time, because even movies that don't have adoption themes may cause emotional triggers in your child.

Questions to Ask

Before watching a movie with an adoption plot line, you should think about questions you can talk about as a family after viewing. You may also want to consider the following questions when choosing a movie:



Continued on page 2

- Is this movie age appropriate? Is my child able to separate fantasy from reality?
- Do they understand that every adopted child has a different story?
- How has adoption impacted their identity?
- Is my child comfortable asking questions that may come up?
- Is my child upset by difficult themes, such as the death of parents, relationships with their birth mother or being perceived as different?

Some children may be too young—or have developmental delays—to connect what happens in a movie to their own adoption story. And some of the movies and TV shows may trigger grief and loss issues. These reactions can still offer teachable moments to discuss with your child the realities of their adoption story.

For older children, movies can present great learning experiences and create a healthy dialog between you and your children. Some questions you could ask include:

- “Did you feel adoption was realistically portrayed in the movie?”
- “How did that scene make you feel?”

You can follow up your questions with facts about your child’s adoption story and the positive effects it has had on your family.

Some children may not be affected by the storyline in a TV show, movie, or book. If your child doesn’t react or seems unmoved by something that really bothers you, take some time and bring it up with your child at a later date. For example, while you’re both doing an activity together, you could say something like, “By the way, I wondered what you thought about that scene in...?” This might give you an opportunity to assess whether or not your child was suppressing

his feelings or whether he just didn’t feel very strongly way one or the other.

Educating the Greater Community

Even though your child might not be affected by a negative portrayal of adoption in a movie, his or her peers, extended family members, or neighbors might be affected. You might recommend some books or movies that you and your family have enjoyed to help educate your community.

Regardless of your children’s situation, movies and books involving adoption can create opportunities to check in with your kids, assess their reactions, and can provide a good learning experience for all of you as a family.



Resources

Additional Resources

- [Mixed Media Messages about Adoption Issues](#)
- [Adoption Movies](#)
- [Explain Adoption Easier](#)