



# Out of the Best Books, Movies, or Music

BY CHRISTA SKOUSEN

It's a Friday night. You've had a hard week jam-packed with school, tests, sports, and work—and now it's finally time to relax!



And what could sound more appealing than sitting down with a big bowl of popcorn, hanging out with some friends, and watching a movie? Only there is one problem: You don't know what movie to watch. Your friend suggests a film that has received several awards, and all the movie critics are raving about it. So you go ahead and flip it on—only to discover it isn't what you thought. Sure the cover looks interesting, the summary on the back seems OK, but once you start watching it, the subject matter, language, or images make you uncomfortable.

Does it ever seem impossible to find a source of entertainment that is both interesting and in line with your standards? Today TV networks, movie producers, and even book authors continue to push the edge of appropriateness to create more shocking material. Never before in history have violence, bad language, and pornography been so pervasive in our media. So what do we do? Do we avoid all forms of media and entertainment altogether?

President Brigham Young offered some advice to his own children that could also be applied to situations you may face today. He encouraged his children to study music and dance, to attend the theater, and to read novels—things that, he said, “expand their frames, add fire to their spirits, and improve their minds” (quoted in Q&A, *New Era*, Sept. 1993, 17).

Despite the rampant inappropriate material, there are still many books, films, and

music selections that are wholesome and can “add fire to our spirits and improve our minds.” You will become informed and more well-rounded by surrounding yourself with material that is both uplifting and inspiring.

But how do you know where to find the good material, especially when there are so many not-so-good options to choose from? As an LDS youth, what you might consider uplifting and worthwhile might be different than what a friend or movie critic might consider. This makes the selection process a little more challenging, but not insurmountable. Consider the following elements when choosing between different media and entertainment sources.

#### Check the Rating

A movie's rating may serve as a jumping off point as you consider different entertainment options.

- Whether it is the G-to-R rating system in the U.S., or another system, consider the reasons for the movie's rating.
- Movies are granted a rating because of such things as language use, crude humor, thematic elements, sexual content, depictions of drug use, violence, etc.
- Steer clear of films that are “unrated,” “uncensored,” or “uncut” versions.

#### Look up the Review

Neither CDs nor books are subject to the kinds of rating standards movies have. And many times a movie with an “OK” rating does not necessarily mean that the subject matter is appropriate for you. But there are reviews and other resources you can go to for help.

- Certain Web sites can describe the plot of a movie or book, or the content of a CD or song.

**T**he ticket to choosing uplifting entertainment and media is often challenging but not impossible. Here are some guidelines.



**W**hen you choose music and other media carefully and with a pure heart, the Holy Ghost will guide you.

- Watch for key words (“coming-of-age,” “edgy,” or “dark”) that might clue you into inappropriate content.

#### Sample a Different Genre

If you ever feel fed up with your entertainment choices, try branching out. There are numerous genres to choose from that maybe you haven’t looked into before.

- Sample different music selections from various artists or composers.
- Try reading a classic work of literature that has stood the test of time.

#### Talk to Someone You Trust

When it comes to making entertainment choices, talk to someone who knows your standards, and ask for their advice.

- A parent or family member is always a good person to talk to.

- Ask for a suggestion from a well-read person in your ward.
- If a class assigns you a book to read that has questionable material, talk to your teacher and ask if there is another book that you can substitute.

#### Pay Attention to Your Feelings

There isn’t one perfect method for rating or reviewing entertainment material, so even after you have done your research, much of the choice is still left up to you.

- As you read, watch, or listen to media, pay close attention to how you feel.
- If you experience inappropriate thoughts or feelings, stop reading, watching, or listening.
- “In short, if you have any question about whether a particular movie, book, or other form of entertainment is appropriate, don’t see it, don’t read it, don’t participate” (*For the Strength of Youth* [2001], 12).

Above all, you can always pray to your Heavenly Father. Ask for the strength to discern good material from bad, and pray for courage to turn away from those things that may seem appealing but are not wholesome or uplifting. When you take the time to study your entertainment options, and you choose carefully, the Holy Ghost will help you to know what is appropriate for you. **NE**

