

# Today's Movies Are Scary

**"Ratings creep" has allowed more violent and sexually explicit content into movies.**

I love movies, but recently I've discovered movies are getting scarier. Not because of horror, but from the overall slide toward coarse language, vulgarity and sexuality, even in movies marketed as "family" films. The current movie rating system began in 1968 and called for four categories:

1. G for General Audiences. All ages admitted.
2. M for Mature Audiences. Parental guidance suggested, but all ages admitted.
3. R for Restricted. Children under 16 not admitted without an accompanying parent or adult guardian (later raised to under 17 years of age, and varies in some jurisdictions).
4. X. No one under 17 admitted.

Then, in 1984 the industry made another adjustment. The PG category (originally M, then GP) was split into two groupings, PG and PG-13. PG-13 meant a higher level of intensity than PG. And in 1990, NC-17 replaced X. You can find detailed explanations of each category on the Motion Picture Association of America's Web site at <http://www.filmratings.com>.

But today we're seeing what insiders call "ratings creep," as more and more objectionable content is allowed in G- and PG-rated films. In 2004 the Harvard School of Public Health released a study that reported: "Ratings creep has occurred over the last decade and today's movies contain significantly more violence, sex and profanity on average than movies of the same rating a decade ago." The decade of "ratings creep" has sadly allowed more vulgar, violent and sexually explicit content into movies.

According to Movieguide magazine, "The study found more violence and sex in PG movies, more violence, sex, and nudity in PG-13 movies, and more sex and profanity in R-rated movies." It also found more violence in G-rated animated movies than non-animated movies rated G.

The industry responds that standards in American society are constantly changing and the ratings just reflect that change.

I'm not a numbers guy. I'm not one of those Christians who analyze movies based on the number of bad words, violent acts or exposed breasts. Great movies often have to portray the violent and horrible world we live in every day.

How do you show the horrors of the Holocaust without violence? Or expose evil without showing its consequences?

To write a movie script, I once interviewed the Christian family of a young girl who had been murdered by a school classmate shortly after she became a believer. Before her conversion, she was a sexually active, profane teenager who experimented with the occult.

A Christian investor in the movie was shocked and said, "You can't show her using profanity or participating in satanic rituals in the movie." At that point, the girl's own mother said, "But if you don't show how deeply in sin she had fallen, you'll never be able to show how much God's grace changed her life."

We don't want to be bound by legalism and dismiss a great movie because an actor used profanity. But we do need to be responsible when it comes to our families. That's why now,

more than ever, we need to be vigilant and research movies before our kids see them.

To do that, I recommend you check out , , and .

These and other sites review films with families in mind and will let you know just how explicit a movie will be. Remember, movie theaters are not the safe places they used to be, and no one else is looking out for your family. Be responsible and check out the movie before you go.

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