

# Debating Disney: Pedagogical Perspectives on Commercial Cinema



## Debating Disney: Pedagogical Perspectives on Commercial Cinema by Julie Collins

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The Walt Disney Company is one of the most powerful and influential media conglomerates in the world. Its films have been seen by billions of people and have had a profound impact on popular culture. However, Disney's films have also been the subject of much debate, with critics arguing that they promote harmful stereotypes and values.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in using Disney films as a pedagogical tool. Educators have argued that these films can be used to teach critical literacy skills and foster discussions about social issues. However, there is also a risk that Disney films can be used to reinforce harmful stereotypes and values.

In this article, we will examine the pedagogical implications of Disney's commercial cinema. We will explore the ways in which these films can be

used to teach critical literacy skills and foster discussions about social issues. We will also consider the risks associated with using Disney films in the classroom.

## ## Critical Literacy Skills

Critical literacy is the ability to critically analyze and evaluate information. It is an essential skill for students in today's world, where they are constantly bombarded with information from a variety of sources.

Disney films can be a valuable resource for teaching critical literacy skills. These films often contain complex and nuanced messages that can be difficult for students to understand. By analyzing these messages, students can develop their critical thinking skills and learn to identify and challenge harmful stereotypes and values.

For example, the film "The Lion King" can be used to teach students about the dangers of colonialism. The film's protagonist, Simba, is a young lion who is forced to flee his home after his father is killed by his uncle. Simba eventually returns to his home and defeats his uncle, but not before he learns the importance of responsibility and leadership.

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This film can be used to teach students about the importance of gender equality. The film's protagonist, Mulan, is a young woman who disguises

herself as a man in order to join the army and fight for her country. Mulan's story teaches students that women are just as capable as men and that they should not be limited by gender stereotypes.

## ## Social Issues

Disney films can also be used to foster discussions about social issues. These films often deal with complex and controversial topics, such as racism, sexism, and poverty.

By watching and discussing these films, students can develop a better understanding of these issues and how they affect people's lives. For example, the film "Zootopia" can be used to teach students about the dangers of prejudice and discrimination. The film's protagonist, Judy Hopps, is a rabbit who becomes the first rabbit to join the Zootopia Police Department. Judy faces prejudice and discrimination from her fellow officers, but she eventually overcomes these obstacles and becomes a respected member of the force.

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## ## Risks

While Disney films can be a valuable resource for teaching critical literacy skills and fostering discussions about social issues, there are also some

risks associated with using these films in the classroom.

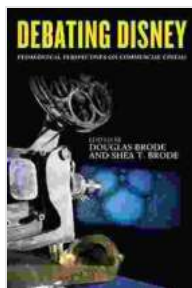
One risk is that Disney films can be used to reinforce harmful stereotypes and values. For example, the film "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" has been criticized for its portrayal of women as passive and helpless. The film also perpetuates the myth that women need to be rescued by men.

Another risk is that Disney films can be used to promote consumerism. These films often feature products and characters that children are encouraged to buy. This can lead to children developing unhealthy spending habits and a materialistic worldview.

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Disney films are a complex and controversial topic. These films can be used to teach critical literacy skills and foster discussions about social issues. However, there are also some risks associated with using these films in the classroom. It is important to be aware of these risks and to use Disney films in a way that is critical and reflective.

When used in a thoughtful and critical way, Disney films can be a valuable resource for teaching students about a variety of important topics. However, it is important to be aware of the risks associated with using these films and to use them in a way that is critical and reflective.



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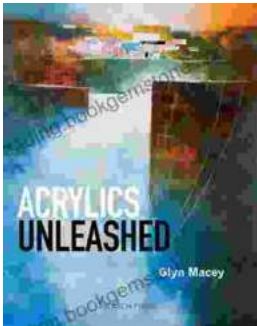
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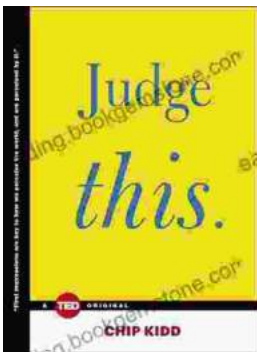
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