



Lesson Title: He Said She Said

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Tonight is the night... or is it? The story of a guy and his girlfriend dealing with the awkwardness of and embarrassment about safe sex.

The film deals with prevention, communication, and decision-making. All Scenarios USA films also deal with relationships, communication, self-esteem and decision-making

Story Behind the Story:

He Said, She Said was Scenarios USA's first film and set a high standard for the future Scenarios USA film shorts. Director Doug Liman (Mr. and Mrs. Smith) extended himself to the youth writers from day one, when the writers were invited to Doug's house. Ravi Lambert, one of the writers of the winning script, expressed a strong interest in filmmaking. Doug made Ravi co-director of the film and gave him the power to make directorial decisions. Ravi was involved in every part of directing, including giving direction to the actors and calling "Action," while sitting on the camera dolly next to Doug. In fact, Ravi was responsible for casting a relatively unknown actress (at that time!), Rosario Dawson.

As the writers and director prepared for production, Scenarios USA was busy trying to raise money for the film, which was their first. With only 3 weeks to go until shooting, Scenarios USA had raised only half of the money for production! Thankfully, the crew of *He Said, She Said* worked for almost no money, Kodak donated the film, and the Manhattan-based editing house, Madhouse edited the film pro bono.

He Said, She Said was shot in 12 hours in the writers' neighborhood of Washington Heights (the northern tip of Manhattan). MTV was also on location, filming the entire process. *He Said, She Said* defined the professional quality of all the Scenarios USA films and the working relationship between the film professionals and the youth.



Writers Bios:

Writers Ravi Lambert, Aristides Legakis, Salvador Garcia and Zakii Cotman were 17-year old high school students when they wrote *He Said, She Said*. All four writers are from Harlem and Washington Heights, NY.

Writer and Co-Director, Ravi Lambert, went on to attend the selective State University of New York at Purchase's Film Program and, while his success in film is unquestionable, he is now writing and producing hip-hop and R&B.

Talent Bios:

Doug Liman began making films when he was in junior high school. He received the MTV Movie Award for Best New Director for his second movie *Swingers*, for which he was both director and cinematographer. His success continued with the critical acclaim of *Go!*, *The Bourne Identity*, *Mr. And Mrs. Smith* and *Jumper*. He has also directed cutting-edge commercials for such famous brands as Levi's, Chrysler and Sony. Mr. Liman has a proven reputation for discovering new talent, including Matthew Perry, Calista Flockhart, Heather Graham, Vince Vaughn, Taye Diggs and Katie Holmes.

Honors:

- Aired on Showtime
- Premiered on MTV as part of World AIDS Day Special
- Honored with Porter Novelli for Excellence and Innovation in Social Marketing
- Featured at the Museum of World Cultures, Sweden
- Screened at the Wisconsin International Film Festival 2008
- Featured at the Pride International Film Festival, Philippines



DISCUSSION GUIDE -QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

1. Why do you think purchasing condoms is likened to buying drugs in the film? Where could the young man have bought condoms? Why do schools sometimes give them out? Why do you think some people are against making condoms available in schools?
(Students may discuss the fact that they find buying condoms embarrassing and difficult, but note that it is a very responsible and mature thing to do. Also point out that making condoms available to young people does not increase the likelihood that they will have intercourse.)
2. What do you think about the couple's level of communication? Are they comfortable with one another?
(Note how the couple seems to have discussed the importance of contraception prior to engaging in intercourse. They also seem fairly comfortable talking about how to use condoms with each other.)
3. When the young man does not seem to know how to use a condom, his girlfriend gives him a demonstration. What reactions could someone have to the young woman showing the young man how to put on a condom?
(This is a scene which demonstrates that it is not significant who has more information, but rather that the knowledge is used. Discuss with students the importance of not letting pride or gender stereotypes prevent them from learning how to protect themselves.)
4. When the couple needs a new condom, the young man goes back outside to purchase another one. What does this decision say to you?
(Review the importance of never having sex without a condom, regardless of how much trouble getting one may seem to be.)



DISCUSSION GUIDE -THROUGH THE LENS OF A FILMMAKER

5. This film is very short and there are few scenes. Given these constraints, does it contain the necessary elements to tell a compelling story?
(In such a film, the characters and plot have to be well-focused. Note how speed and intensity are relayed through editing, such as in the blurry running scenes and in the accelerated action when the boy enters the room.)
6. What role does dialogue play in this film? How do the characters communicate without talking?
(Discuss the fact that the actors are very expressive and use their faces to reveal their feelings.)
7. Comment on climax and resolution relating to this film.
(Discuss how climax and resolution may not be used in a traditional sense in this film, but that the “resolution” is the empowerment of the woman to stand behind her decision to insist on protected sex. Note how humor was used to make the couple’s interaction seem desirable to both men and women.)
8. What is the difference between using comedy versus drama to tell a story?
(Discuss the advantages of each method for trying to make teens more comfortable and for relaying a serious message to them.)
9. Even short films require a great deal of money. How might you go about securing funding to produce a short film?
(Discuss how one could try to obtain film donations and ask actors to work “pro bono” for a project. Note that the lead actress in this film has moved on to play prominent roles in many Hollywood films.)



LAYING THE GROUND WORK

The questions contained in this guide are designed to utilize critical thinking and dialogue to promote teenagers' self-awareness and understanding of relationships and sexual health. Working through these questions will provide adolescents with a forum to discuss their own opinions and choices, hear others' viewpoints, and to analyze the behavior of the characters they see in the films. This process will encourage the sharing of valuable information and the development of skills that can help young people make positive decisions that will affect their health and their lives.

Much of the dialogue that is generated may involve sensitive subjects. Therefore, teachers may wish to offer students an Anonymous Question Box in which they can insert questions before or after class. If this is done, it is important for teachers to be prepared to recognize, in some appropriate fashion, all issues that are raised and to let students know that:

No question is wrong or silly. Anyone who contributes a question to the box will remain anonymous, and all questions will be addressed, either by the primary instructor or a facilitator who is invited to cover specific issues.

Given the nature of the material, it is useful to introduce Ground Rules that may be posted in the classroom. These may need to be referred to regularly, particularly when sensitive issues arise. As an ice-breaking activity, teachers can allow students to develop their own ground rules and help them discuss their importance. Such a list may include the following:

1. **Right to Pass:** We will respect ones choice to abstain from the discussion.
2. **Respect:** We will listen attentively to what others have to say, allowing one person to speak at a time.
3. **Sensitivity:** We will recognize that it may be difficult for our classmates to share stories about themselves and their feelings.
4. **Supportiveness:** We will not criticize other people, although we may disagree with their point of view.
5. **Understanding:** We will be aware that others may differ in their religion, cultural background, or in other ways and we will, therefore, be thoughtful about the comments we make.
6. **Confidentiality:** We will not repeat anything that is shared within the group to anyone outside of the group. While we may talk about the content of the group discussion, we will not identify who has raised a particular issue or who has disclosed a personal story or feeling.



SCENARIOS USA—A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Scenarios USA is a non-profit organization that uses writing and filmmaking to foster youth leadership, advocacy and self-expression in underserved teens. Scenarios USA asks young people to write about the issues that shape their lives for the annual “What’s the REAL DEAL?” writing contest, and thousands have responded with their raw and revealing insights. The winning writers are partnered with some of Hollywood’s finest filmmakers to transform their stories into award-winning short films. 15 million people a year watch the Scenarios USA films at film festivals, on television, and in high schools nationwide. Scenarios USA believes that by valuing youth and listening to their opinions, we can have an impact on promoting healthy relationships and lowering the rate of HIV, STDs and pregnancy among teens.

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