



Discussion guide developed by Heartland Truly Moving Pictures to accompany *Cinderella Man*, a Truly Moving Picture Award-winning film. A Truly Moving Picture Award winner is a film that unlocks the vast potential of the human spirit and enables us to view stories that display courage, integrity and hope, taking entertainment to a higher level.

www.TrulyMovingPictures.org

Cinderella Man

One Film Can

Heartland Truly Moving Pictures, a non-profit organization, recognizes and honors films and filmmakers whose work explores the human journey by expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life. We believe that one film can move us to laughter, to tears, or to make a difference. *Cinderella Man* is a movie that demonstrates that One Film Can.

Synopsis

Academy Award®-winning producer Brian Grazer, director Ron Howard and screenwriter Akiva Goldsman (all Oscar® winners for 2001's *A Beautiful Mind*) are reunited with Oscar® winner Russell Crowe for Universal Pictures-Miramax Films-Imagine Entertainment's *Cinderella Man*. Starring opposite Crowe is Oscar® winner Renée Zellweger.

Crowe stars in the story inspired by the life of legendary athlete Jim Braddock, a once-promising light heavy-weight boxer forced into retirement after a string of losses in the ring. As the nation enters the darkest years of the Great Depression, Braddock accepts a string of dead-end jobs to support his wife, Mae (Renée Zellweger), and their children, while never totally abandoning his dream of boxing again.

Thanks to a last-minute cancellation, Braddock finds himself back in the ring against the second-ranked world contender—and to everyone's amazement, Braddock wins in the third round. Despite being pounds lighter than his opponents and repeated injuries to his hands, Braddock continues to fight against challengers and win. Carrying on his shoulders the hopes and dreams of the disenfranchised, Braddock, dubbed the "Cinderella Man," faces his toughest challenger in Max Baer (Craig Bierko), the heavyweight champion of the world, renowned for having killed two men in the ring.

Braddock—not so much a great boxer as a great man who boxed—climbed into the ring seeking nothing more than to provide for his wife and children. His commitment to them inspired him to championship, elevating the family man with a simple cause to the level of legend.

Cinderella Man stars Russell Crowe, Renée Zellweger, Paul Giamatti, Craig Bierko, Bruce McGill and Paddy Considine; and is produced by Brian Grazer, Ron Howard and Penny Marshall. The screenplay is by Cliff Hollingsworth and Akiva Goldsman, from a story by Hollingsworth. The film is directed by Ron Howard. The film is a Universal Pictures / Miramax Films / Imagine Entertainment presentation of a Brian Grazer Production in association with Parkway Productions, with Universal Pictures distributing domestically and Buena Vista International handling the international distribution of the film for Miramax.

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One man's extraordinary fight to save the family he loved.

The tagline above from the movie sums up the battles boxer James Braddock fought over the years as he struggled to support his family during the Great Depression despite his diminished boxing career, hampered by injury. *Cinderella Man* is based on the true story of boxer James Braddock's fairy tale-like rise to hold the title of Heavyweight boxing champion.

With a rise in popularity beginning in the 1920's, boxing held its popularity during the Great Depression, and on most accounts, was second in popularity only to baseball. Although attendance at games dwindled during the Depression, radio gave access to people listening from their homes.

Discussion Questions

- Why do you believe boxing was such a popular sport, particularly during the Great Depression?
- Hollywood has made a number of boxing movies. What do you believe is it about boxing that Hollywood embraces and celebrates on the big screen?
- Do you view *Cinderella Man* primarily as a movie about boxing or something more? Why?
- Do you believe Jim Braddock's rise would have been as celebrated if it had taken place during a different time period? Please explain.
- Although the movie is steeped in history it is important to acknowledge that even characters based on real people are changed in order to create tension onscreen. By many accounts, Max Baer was a playboy and a clown, but not the vicious killer as was portrayed in the film. He did kill a man in the ring, but was remorseful about having done so. Why do you believe Ron Howard changed Max Baer's true character for this film?
- Do you agree with directors and writers who alter characters rooted in real life in order to help evoke a particular emotion or tension? Why?
- Braddock was dubbed "Cinderella Man" by newspaper man Damon Runyon and the media referred to Baer as "Madcap Maxie" but also referred to him as a "killer" in the ring. How do you view media's ability to impact the reputations of individuals?
- Learn more about James Braddock at www.jamesbraddock.com
- Learn more about Max Baer at www.ibhof.com/baer.htm

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“If we can’t stay together that means we’ve lost.” James Braddock to Mae

James Braddock certainly encountered frustration at not being able to provide well for his family during some of their leanest years, but he always worked to keep the family together, as the quote at the top of this page demonstrates.

Today the subject of money is one of the most difficult topics that marriages face. Not surprisingly, during the Great Depression the complete financial devastation that plagued some families took its toll. Some husbands lost their jobs and had to rely on their wives as a source of income. While some husbands left to find work in other locations, some never returned home, because of their frustration with not finding work and the resulting lack of self-respect.

Discussion Questions

- Did Mae and Jim’s relationship change over the course of the movie? In what way?
- Which impacted their relationship more: Money or Jim’s boxing career? Why?
- When the electricity had been turned off in their home and Mae took the children to stay with relatives without letting Jim know, with which parent did you most identify?
- Jim and Mae’s son stole from the butcher because he was so concerned that the Braddock family would split up due to money woes. Think about and discuss the impact of the Great Depression on youth growing up in it and the responsibilities many took on to help their families.
- For a man with pride, such as Braddock, asking for money from those managers and agents at the club was a very humbling experience. Could you have done the same in a situation such as Braddock’s? Why?
- Consider Mae and Jim’s friends Mike and Sarah Wilson. Mike worked with Jim at the docks and they came to be friends. Compare and contrast Mike and Jim’s experiences and reactions to the helplessness each must have felt when trying to support their families.

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“If I work 26 hours out of every 24 it still won’t add up.” James Braddock to Mae

Braddock, like many men and women during the Great Depression, did all that he could to survive and keep his family together. There was no easy way to escape the situation they were in and the hardship lasted many years. While the question of how to survive plagued the Braddocks each day, they never seemed to fully lose hope.

Discussion Questions

- The Great Depression was the largest economic downturn of the 20th century and began in most countries in 1929 with the American stock market crash on October 29, 1929. Seeing the Great Depression portrayed on screen, can you identify with the crisis?
- The economic downturn in 2008 has been compared to the Great Depression, yet is far from the magnitude of what affected America so many years ago. Today are there similarities between the economy and people’s lifestyles during the Great Depression? What are some major differences between that catastrophe and today?
- The opening of the movie shows a happy and wealthy Jim and Mae, but then jumps forward four years to the couple and their family who have lost their home and many of their possessions. How do Mae and Jim deal with these hardships? Do you have relatives who lived during the Great Depression? How were they affected and how did they deal with their circumstance?
- When financial problems strike, the affected often reassess their needs versus wants. In a similar situation how would you reassess your needs?
- Jim Braddock was a proud individual who reluctantly accepted government relief. As portrayed in the movie Braddock did return the money once he came back into solid financial footing. What do you think of Braddock’s action? Would you have done the same? Why?

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Truly Moving Moments

Cinderella Man has been honored as a Heartland Truly Moving Picture Award-winning film. This award was created to honor films released theatrically that align with Heartland's mission to recognize and honor films and filmmakers whose work explores the human journey by artistically expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life.

These award-winning movies are made up of moving and inspiring moments – those moments that cause you to think, see something in your life differently, be inspired to do something. It's what makes the movie and its message remain with you well after you've left the theatre.

Think about *Cinderella Man*. What were the moments that stood out to you? How did they make you feel? How will they cause you to think about things differently in the future? Share those Truly Moving moments with others at www.TrulyMovingPictures.org. Simply create a membership or login if you already have one and then search the movie list for *Cinderella Man*. You can leave your review of the movie or thoughts about your Truly Moving Picture in the "Thoughts and Reviews" section.



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