Jennifer Siebel Newsom’s ***Miss Representation*** (2011) Viewing Guide

**“You can’t be what you can’t see.” ~Marian Wright Edelma**

**“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.” ~Alice Walker**

**Pre-viewing questions:**

1. How many hours a day do you consume media?
2. What is your favorite TV show or film?
3. Name a local politician.

**Viewing questions:**

1. According to the documentary, how many hours a day does the average teen consume media?
2. Describe the opening sequence. What does the opening sequence argue?
3. According to the documentary, what are the effects of digitally enhanced photos?
4. U.S. women spend $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ a year on beauty products and salon services. How much is tuition for an in-state, 4 year school?
5. Women make up \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of the population, yet comprise only \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of Congress.
6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ countries in the world have had female presidents or prime ministers.
7. The US is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_th in the world in terms of legislatures.
8. To what does the documentary credit this disparity of women and democratic representation?
9. Name 2 other ways women are marginalized in the United States.
10. According to the documentary, what 2 things need to happen to get women to the next rung?
11. Girls won’t vote for each other. Why not?
12. When Jennifer Siebel Newsom began to pursue acting, what was her agent’s advice?
13. How are men portrayed in the Hollywood sequence? Women?
14. According to the documentary, female protagonists are portrayed in 2 ways. List them.
15. What are two ways female actors are ask to change their physical appearance?
16. How does the media portray female leaders? List 3 of the names and/or examples.
17. What is the effect of media disrespecting female leaders?
18. What is symbolic annihilation?
19. The documentary argues when women gain power, there is inevitably a backlash. Name 2 examples.
20. What is the result of the deregulation of TV?
21. According to Jean Kilbourne, what happens when a woman, or any human, is turned into an object (objectified)?
22. Women are not alone in their plight; men have a different plight in America. According to the documentary what is an American man’s plight?
23. At the close of the documentary, there is a clear call to action. What does the documentary suggest we do to change the female state of America? List five.

**Post-viewing questions:**

1. This documentary is from 2011. Has the plight of the American female gotten better or worse the same since the documentary’s release? Please provide an example to support your argument.

1. Name a recent moment when a female celebrity, politician, or journalist has been shamed for her outward appearance, not her competency.
2. Track your consumption of media for one day. How many hours do you spend consuming media?

**ANSWER KEY**

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**“You can’t be what you can’t see.” ~Marian Wright Edelma**

**“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.” Alice Walker**

**Pre-viewing questions:**

1. How many hours a day do you consume media?   
   Most students will underestimate the average from the film.
2. What is your favorite TV show or film?  
   Most students will list a TV show or film with a male protagonist.
3. Name a local politician.  
   Most students will only be able to name a male politician, if any at all.

**Viewing questions:**

1. According to the documentary, how many hours a day does the average teen consume media?  
   10 hours and 45 minutes
2. Describe the opening sequence. What does the opening sequence argue?   
   Most women are seen in color, scantily clad, and as sexual objects. Progressive women are featured in black and white, wearing appropriate clothing. The opening sequence argues women are often seen as sexual objects, not women of progress.
3. According to the documentary, what are the effects of digitally enhanced photos?  
   Women and girls feel they must meet the digitally enhanced perfection, which is impossible. Boys and men come to expect such perfection in real-life women.
4. U.S. women spend $12,000 to $15,000 a year on beauty products and salon services. How much is tuition for an in-state, 4 year school?   
   In Ohio, in-state tuition at a four year school ranges from $10,000 to $15,000 a year. Women could be spending more money on beauty than school.
5. Women make up 51% of the population, yet comprise only 17% of Congress.
6. Sixty-seven countries in the world have had female presidents or prime ministers.
7. The US is 90th in the world in terms of legislatures.
8. To what does the documentary credit this disparity of women and democratic representation?  
   When women see themselves as objects (self-objectification), they are less empowered and less inclined to seek positions of power.
9. Name 2 other ways women are marginalized in the United States.
   1. Women make $.77 to each man’s $1.00.
   2. In some states, women are denied insurance because domestic abuse is seen as a pre-existing condition.
   3. The U.S. does not have a paid family leave policy. (This could arguably marginalize fathers as well.)
10. According to the documentary, what 2 things need to happen to get women to the next rung?
    1. There must be female candidates in the pool to vote for them.
    2. There must be a psychological breakthrough.
11. Girls won’t vote for each other. Why not?  
    They tend to be in completion with one another. “Girls are harder on other girls.”
12. When Jennifer Siebel Newsom began to pursue acting, what was her agent’s advice?   
    She was told to lie about being 28-years-old. She was also told to remove her Stanford MBA from her resume, as it could be viewed as threatening.
13. How are men portrayed in the Hollywood sequence? Women?  
    Men are portrayed as muscular and violent, shooting guns and racing cars. Women are seen as sex symbols, wearing bikinis and dancing promiscuously. “Women are never the protagonist.”
14. According to the documentary, female protagonists have few archetypes. Describe two.

1. The “bitchy boss” who is typically brought down by a subordinate, generally a male. 2. The insecure girl who simply wants to find romance. 3. The action hero who is simply a “fighting fuck toy.”

1. What are two ways female actors are ask to change their physical appearance?  
   Female actors have been asked to wear falsies, remove teeth, get Botox and collagen injections.
2. How does the media portray female leaders? List 3 of the names and/or examples.  
   The media portray female leaders as: dumb, “skanks,” “ugly hag,” nagging, PMS, mood swings, “bitch,” “Wicked Witch of the West,” “fat moron,” homemakers. Men “state,” while women “complain.” Hillary Clinton is referred to as “Mrs.” Instead of secretary. Women are twice as likely to be described as “emotional,” making them seem like unstable leaders.
3. What is the effect of media disrespecting female leaders?  
   Because female leaders are “pornified and ditzified,” female leaders are trivialized, making them less powerful.
4. What is symbolic annihilation?   
   If women are not represented in media, then they do not matter or do not exist.
5. The documentary argues when women gain power there is inevitably a backlash. Name 2 examples.  
   1. After WWII, women were promptly fired from their jobs, even though 80% wanted to stay. The government then launched a media campaign to “re-domesticate” women. 2. The women’s liberation movement of the 70s produced a conservative movement in the 80s where the 1982 Equal Rights Amendment failed.
6. What is the result of the deregulation of TV?   
   We now have more content with fewer limits, which results in less standards. Ultimately, there is less news and more gossip, as gossip is inexpensive. Corporations are worried about the bottom line, not the effects of such content.
7. According to Jean Kilbourne, what happens when a woman, or any human, is turned into an object (objectified)?  
   When someone is objectified, it is the first step toward justifying violence against a person.
8. Women are not alone in their plight; men have a different plight in America. According to the documentary what is an American man’s plight?  
   Men are “emotionally illiterate.” Men are trained by media and society to have such high physical expectations of women. Men are “emotionally constipated.”
9. At the close of the documentary, there is a clear call to action. What does the documentary suggest we do to change the female state of America? List five.  
   1. Hold companies accountable for their actions and advertisements.
   2. Live your own vision.
   3. Find role models wherever you can.
   4. Women in power need to mentor up-and-coming women.
   5. Use your purchasing power.
   6. Women should stand up for each other.
   7. Don’t scrutinize other women.
   8. Go see films with female leads and directors, especially on the Friday of opening weekend.
   9. Look at the media critically.
   10. Teach media literacy.

**Post-viewing questions:**

1. This documentary is from 2011. Has the plight of the American female gotten better or worse since the documentary’s release? Please provide an example to support your argument.  
   Better: The Women’s March is the largest march in history. More women seek and secure a higher education. Hillary Clinton won the popular vote. A plus-size model was featured on the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit cover. *Star Wars: A New Hope*, *Hidden Figures*, and *The Hunger Games* all feature a female protagonist.

Worse: The prevalence of social media encourages the perfection of women, specifically filters. Donald Trump’s remarks about women during his campaign (and ultimate win) were negative toward women. Brock Turner’s mild sentence and a heightened rape culture surrounds our campuses. Females are encouraged to have a thigh gap.

1. Name a recent moment when a female celebrity, politician, or journalist has been shamed for her outward appearance, not her competency.   
   Lady Gaga was “fat shamed” after her 2017 Super Bowl halftime show. Hillary Clinton’s appearance and voice during her campaign for the presidency. Amal Clooney spoke to the UN about ISIS and all the media reported was her baby bump. Emma Watson feminism was criticized for her “Rebel Belle” photos in Vanity Fair. Donald Trump attacked Megyn Kelly during the debates. Adele’s boyfriend was accused of liking “chubby love.”
2. Track your consumption of media for one day. How many hours do you spend consuming media?

Student totals will vary, but it is likely higher than what they had projected before the documentary.