Jennifer Siebel Newsom’s ***The Mask You Live In*** (2015) Viewing Guide 91 mins.

**Pre-viewing Questions:**

1. “He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it…” George Orwell

What does Orwell mean?

1. Read and annotate “We Wear the Mask” by Paul Laurence Dunbar. According to Dunbar, why do people wear a mask?

**NOTES:**

We wear the mask that grins and lies,

It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—

This debt we pay to human guile;

With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,

And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,

In counting all our tears and sighs?

Nay, let them only see us, while

       We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries

To thee from tortured souls arise.

We sing, but oh the clay is vile

Beneath our feet, and long the mile;

But let the world dream otherwise,

       We wear the mask!

1. Finish the following sentence stem: If you really knew me, you’d know…
2. What age were you and in what context when you first heard, “Be a man”?

**Viewing Questions:**

1. According to the documentary’s opening montage, what are some of the issues boys and young men face today?
2. What are some of the rules prisoners learned about masculinity/manhood?

1. What are the three lies told to men in today’s society?

	1. First lie:
	2. Second lie:
	3. Third lie:
2. When does the social constructs/pressures force themselves on boys?
3. What is the difference between sex and gender?

1. What is a parent’s dilemma raising a boy in this type of society?
2. What is the mean team?
3. 1 in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ boys are bullied in school.
4. At what age(s) do boys begin to feel isolated?
5. The average boy tries drugs at age \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
6. Why do boys and men drink alcohol and do drugs?
7. How do boys behave when they are depressed?
8. For boys, suicide is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ leading cause of death.
9. According to the documentary, how does education treat boys?
10. What type of power do teachers and coaches possess in mentoring boys?
11. According to the documentary, what do the military, law enforcement, entertainment teach men?
12. What are the male pop culture archetypes? Name three.
 1.
 2.
 3.
13. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of males feel addicted to video games.
14. According to the Surgeon General, what are the three effects of video games on children?

 1.
 2.
 3.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of boys are exposed to internet porn.
2. What are the effects of so much exposure to pornography?
3. Every \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ seconds a woman is assaulted.
4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of male college students indicated some likelihood of raping if they knew they could get away with it.
5. 1 in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ female college students is the victim of an attempted or completed sexual assault.
6. What is “The Great Set-up”?

1. What do men gain from adhering to the “bro code”?

1. Over \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of all boys are physically abused.
2. 1 in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ boys is sexually abused.
3. Abused and neglected children are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ times more likely to be involved in crime.
4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of homicide perpetrators are male.
5. According to the documentary, why do boys and men resort to violence?

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of mass homicides are done by males.
2. At the close of the documentary, there is a clear call to action. What does the documentary suggest we do to change the male state of America? List five.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

**Post-viewing questions:**

1. Is there a masculinity crisis? Explain.
2. Does Orwell’s quote ring true in today’s society? Dunbar’s poem? Explain.
3. According to the documentary, what is at the root of our nation’s masculinity crisis? Name three causes.

1.

2.

3.

1. Consider each group in the documentary (prisoners, two groups of high school students). What do all of the males seem to have in common? How are they different?

**ANSWER KEY**

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**Pre-viewing Questions:**

1. “He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it…” George Orwell

What does Orwell mean?

If a person takes on a persona again and again, eventually they will become that persona.

1. Read and annotate “We Wear the Mask” by Paul Laurence Dunbar. According to Dunbar, why do people wear a mask? Dunbar believes people wear masks to hide pain.

We wear the mask that grins and lies,

It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—

This debt we pay to human guile;

With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,

And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,

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But let the world dream otherwise,

       We wear the mask!

1. Finish the following sentence stem: If you really knew me, you’d know…

Student answers will vary.

1. What age were you and in what context when you first heard, “Be a man”?

Student answers will vary.

**Viewing Questions:**

1. According to the documentary’s opening montage, what are some of the issues boys and young men face today?

Boys and young men feel emotionally isolated. This isolation results in a sense of loneliness. If they do speak about emotions, they are seen as week. Therefore, they feel they must physically prove their masculinity.

1. What are some of the rules prisoners learned about masculinity/manhood?

Don’t cry. Showing emotion is a weakness. No tattle telling. Money is most important. You must be dominant and in charge. Use violence to solve problems.

1. What are the three lies told to men in today’s society?
	1. First lie: Athletic ability is associated with masculinity.
	2. Second lie: Economic success is associated with masculinity.
	3. Third lie: Sexual conquest is associated with masculinity.
2. When does the social constructs/pressures force themselves on boys?
middle school
3. What is the difference between sex and gender?

Sex is a biological term (male/female), while gender is a social expression (masculine, feminine, transgender).

1. What is a parent’s dilemma raising a boy in this type of society?
Parents know there is a masculinity crisis, but they fear for their boys’ social isolation, so they give/enforce the “masculine tools and rules” they believe their boys need to survive. Some parents don’t know how to be sensitive.
2. What is the mean team?
The mean team is created by boys for boys to oppose the girls. Boys cannot play with girls, and if they do, they can be “fired” from the club. At such a young age (kindergarten) boys understand the rules and consequences for status.
3. 1 in 4 boys are bullied in school.
4. At what age(s) do boys begin to feel isolated?
15, 16, 17, essentially high school
5. The average boy tries drugs at age 13.
6. Why do boys and men drink alcohol and do drugs?
Some believe boys and men are self-medicating to treat loneliness or that the use of drugs and alcohol allows them to open themselves more readily.
7. How do boys behave when they are depressed?
Boys act out, curse, and are generally more aggressive when they are depressed.
8. For boys, suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death.
9. According to the documentary, how does education treat boys?
The documentary cites the use of humiliation as punishment (name on the board), and claims teachers do not ask why a student is behaving badly. Essentially, education silences boys.
10. What type of power do teachers and coaches possess in mentoring boys?
Teachers and coaches have immense power. They can represent surrogate mothers and fathers, modeling family values and characteristics. The can use this power to positively and/or negatively influence males.
11. According to the documentary, what do the military, law enforcement, entertainment teach men?
Masculinity is about domination and aggression. Men attempt to adhere to these hyper-masculine standards.
12. What are the male pop culture archetypes? Name three.
1. strong, silent guy:
2. superhero or hero: uses violence to maintain order
3. thug: usually men of color

4. man-child: degrades women and participates in high-risk activities

1. 31% of males feel addicted to video games.
2. According to the Surgeon General, what are the three effects of video games on children?

1. Players become less sensitive,

2. more fearful of the world,

3. and more aggressive towards others and themselves.

1. 93% of boys are exposed to internet porn.
2. What are the effects of so much exposure to pornography?

Porn usage causes social isolation and what is seen becomes the social norm.

1. Every 9 seconds a woman is assaulted.
2. 35% of male college students indicated some likelihood of raping if they knew they could get away with it.
3. 1 in 5 female college students is the victim of an attempted or completed sexual assault.
4. What is “The Great Set-up”?
We raise boys to reject the feminine and are surprised when they don’t respect women.
5. What do men gain from adhering to the “bro code”?
Bonds, horizontal solidarity and hierarchy
6. Over 1/2 of all boys are physically abused.
7. 1 in 6 boys is sexually abused.
8. Abused and neglected children are 9 times more likely to be involved in crime.
9. 90% of homicide perpetrators are male.
10. According to the documentary, why do boys and men resort to violence?

They feel overwhelmed and out of control. Respect is linked to violence. Boys are taught to externalize pain.

1. 94% of mass homicides are done by males.
2. At the close of the documentary, there is a clear call to action. What does the documentary suggest we do to change the male state of America? List five.

1. Get boys out of their head and into their heart.

2. Redefine strength.

3. Speak out and stand up.

4. Stay with or return to what they already know.

5. Break down the restrictions

6. Give boys permission to process grief, to cry.

7. Mothers can stay close to their sons.

8. Whatever a father does is masculine.

9. Kids need mentors.

10. Coaches need to mentor.

11. Encourage good media and technology.

12. Challenge boys and men to rise to their better selves.

**Post-viewing questions:**

1. Is there a masculinity crisis? Explain.
Most students will say yes. The crisis is instigated by masculine expectations/pressure and as a result, males resort to drugs, alcohol, violence, and suicide. Because violence is perpetrated, men and boys are incarcerated.
2. Does Orwell’s quote ring true in today’s society? Dunbar’s poem? Explain.
Most students believe Orwell and Dunbar ring true in today’s society. Dunbar more so than Orwell, as most men and women do not want to reveal their pain to others for many reasons, but especially boys because they do not want to seem weak. Students were split on Orwell as many of the prisoners seemed sincerely sorry for their actions. They took hyper-masculinity and its mask to the extreme, but students felt their actions reflected society more than the people themselves.
3. According to the documentary, what is at the root of our nation’s masculinity crisis? Name three causes.

1. parents, especially absent fathers

2. schools, teachers and coaches

3. media

4. peers

1. Consider each group in the documentary (prisoners, two groups of high school students). What do all of the males seem to have in common? How are they different?

Most males were missing a father-figure in their lives. Most were men of color. The juveniles had a safe place and mentor with which to share emotions before they committed a serious crime, while the prisoners did not have a safe place or mentor to share their emotions. It seems as though the documentary wants us to believe that if we don’t do something about the masculinity crisis, violence, drug and alcohol use, and incarcerations will continue to increase and claim the lives of more boys and men.