

# JUST ADD POPCORN

THREE MOVIES THAT TURN THE  
SPOTLIGHT ONTO CELEBRITY CULTURE

Is being famous a blessing or a curse? Why have celebrities – once limited to royalty or religious figures – become so important in modern life and how are people influenced by them? From the gods of ancient Greece and Rome to the Hollywood movie stars of the twentieth century people have always admired well-known figures. In recent years, however, the rise of mass media, the growth of the internet and the increase in reality TV shows have amplified the exposure and power of celebrity.

One way to encourage young people to think about the meaning and price of fame, and the impact of celebrity culture, is to watch and discuss a film in which fame and celebrity are major themes. The education charity FILMCLUB has a topic dedicated to Celebrity Culture and many related titles to choose from across its website – from classics such as Oscar winning satire *All About Eve* (U) about an ambitious young actress hoisting herself up the showbusiness ladder, and *It Should Happen to You* (U), which highlights the shallowness of seeking fame for fame's sake – to recent release *The Bling Ring* (15), the true story of a group of LA teens who break into the homes of their favourite celebrities. There are also many in between – including *The Truman Show* (PG) about a man who discovers his whole life is a reality TV Show, and films that explore people's thirst for fame and how far they will go to achieve it, such as *To Die For* (15) with Nicole Kidman and Scorsese's *The King of Comedy* (PG).

"Many moral issues are raised, making you question what actually is reality and how can we ever know that what we are living is the truth." Zoe, 15, from her review of *The Truman Show* on the FILMCLUB website.

## FILMCLUB recommends...



### IT SHOULD HAPPEN TO YOU (1954, U)

Modest filmmaker Pete falls for out-of-work model Gladys. Desperate to make it big, she rents a Manhattan billboard with her name splashed across it. Things escalate when wealthy businessman Evan is keen to have the advertising space for himself, and pays Gladys enough money to rent 6 billboards elsewhere across New York. Within days her image is all over town and celebrity life is thrust upon her leaving her relationship with Pete in its shadows.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS:

1. What does being famous mean to Gladys – is it a positive or negative aspiration?
2. What does Gladys become famous for? What is the film telling us about the culture of celebrity?
3. What affect does fame have on Gladys' relationships? Why?



### THE TRUMAN SHOW (1998, PG)

On the surface, Truman Burbank's life seems perfectly average, but he's bored and longs for something more. One day, by chance, Truman discovers he's been living a lie, that he's actually the unwitting star of a hugely popular TV show and that those around him are all really actors. A fascinating, existential satire, that also works as sheer entertainment.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS:

1. In the film, what type of TV programme is *The Truman Show*? Why do you think audiences enjoy watching Truman so much?
2. What type of society does *The Truman Show* depict, what values does it rely on?
3. Consider the role of Christof, the show's creator – what comment is the film making about the media's influence within society?



### THE BLING RING (2013, 15) RELEASED 28TH OCT

In 2008, a group of Los Angeles teenagers realised that, if they could figure out when their favourite celebrities weren't at home, they could track down their houses and break in. After robbing the homes of Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan and Orlando Bloom for extravagant clothes and accessories for their own wardrobes, they were caught and arrested, becoming famous themselves – for all the wrong reasons.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS:

1. What is it about celebrity culture that motivates the group to commit the crimes they commit?
2. To what extent does the internet and social media add to the influence of celebrity culture in their lives?
3. What comment is the filmmaker making with the appearance of Paris Hilton and Kirsten Dunst in the film?



## TAKE IT FURTHER

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