



ROCKY



Rated: PG

Running Time: 2 hours

Starring: Sylvester Stallone as Rocky Balboa; Talia Shire as Adrian; Burt Young as Paulie; Carl Weathers as Apollo Creed; Burgess Meredith as Mickey

Director: John G. Avildsen

Themes: Respect, romantic love, unfulfilled dreams, forgiveness, self-control, self-discipline, finding value in others,

Story Summary

If enough people call you a bum, you might start believing it. That's the dilemma facing Rocky Balboa, a streetwise Philadelphia club boxer tired of getting his brains scrambled for a few bucks a night. But that's all he has to lean on. Rocky isn't well-educated, and he's too merciful to excel at his day job of collecting for a loan shark who scolds, "How come you didn't break this guy's thumb like I told you to?" It's because, despite being a pugilist, Rocky is a decent, forgiving lug.

Rocky's family consists of a goldfish and two turtles. They provide an excuse to frequent the local pet shop where he cracks bad jokes for a mousy employee named Adrian. She's a shy, insecure woman misunderstood and mistreated by people close to her, including her uncouth, hot-tempered brother, Paulie. But Rocky sees beauty there. He gently pursues her, knowing all too well how it feels to be labeled a loser.

Professionally, Rocky has been held back by the fact that he's a southpaw (left-handed fighters intimidate prospective opponents), and because he lacks the drive and confidence of other boxers. He's stung when Mickey, the crusty old manager of his neighborhood gym, gives his locker to a younger, more promising protégé. Rocky resists the temptation to be bitter. Rather, he absorbs the blow and moves on, unaware that his fortunes are about to improve. The reigning heavy-weight champion, Apollo Creed, learns that an injury will sideline his opponent for a high-profile bicentennial bout. He needs a challenger. With top contenders unavailable on such short notice, the enterprising showman decides to give a local unknown a shot at the title. Balboa isn't sure he should accept,

battling great odds, balancing toughness and compassion

Cautions: Boxing violence, as well as tobacco and alcohol use. An abusive rant, while unsettling, exposes the ugly side of drunkenness. A couple kisses passionately, and asides imply that they may have had sex. This 1976 Best Picture winner also contains disrespectful exchanges, several crass expressions ("screw you," "ballin'") and about 20 profanities, including an s-word and four uses of "g--d---." The worst of those problems may be avoided by watching the edited-for-TV version.

but gets talked into this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Meanwhile, Rocky and Adrian develop a sweet friendship. He makes her feel pretty, and treats her with respect, causing her to inch out of her shell. She argues that he's not a dumb, untalented thug, and believes he can actually beat Apollo. But before squaring off against the champ, Rocky must battle back feelings of betrayal when Mickey appears on his doorstep, wanting to manage him. The old man tries to talk his way back into the good graces of a "son" he abandoned. After responding with stony silence, then a verbal tirade, Rocky extends forgiveness and reconciliation.

Soon Rocky finds himself consumed with a no-frills training regimen. Cold early-morning runs. Grueling workouts with Mickey. Trips to a meat locker where slabs of meat double as punching bags. In the process, this torchbearer for the American dream gets thrust into the spotlight—where Adrian's brother would love to join him. But Paulie does more to embarrass Rocky than help him. Feeling unappreciated, Paulie turns to the bottle and becomes abusive. He hurls insults at Adrian and takes a

baseball bat to their living room. Adrian boldly puts her brother in his place and asks Rocky if she can stay with him (where they are shown sleeping in separate beds).

The big day approaches. Rocky realizes he's out of his league. All he wants to do is go the distance—something no one has ever done with Apollo—and prove he's not just another bum from the streets. In the ring the showy Creed gets more than he bargained for. A thrilling display goes the full 15



rounds before Rocky's moral victory is complete and his true prize, Adrian, rushes to his side.

Before You Watch

The character of Rocky Balboa was inspired by New Jersey club fighter Chuck Wepner (nicknamed the "Bayonne Bleeder"), who challenged heavyweight champ Muhammad Ali to a title fight in 1975. Go online together and learn a little about the boxer. As you watch *Rocky*, identify aspects of the film that are similar to what you read.

Bible Bookmarks: Prov. 12:26, 16:18, 20:3; Joel 2:23-27; Mark 8:34; 1 Cor. 9:24-27, 15:33; 2 Cor. 12:9-10; Phil. 3:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:7; Heb. 12:1

Talking Points

1 While skating, Rocky and Adrian talk of how parents' remarks about their flaws affected their self-image and direction in life. Why do the opinions of certain people leave such a mark? Take comfort in the knowledge that everyone has weaknesses, and the Lord wants to compensate for them (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

2 Rocky points out that Adrian is shy by nature. Imagine a "shyness scale" with Adrian as a 10 and the bombastic Apollo as a 1. Where would you fall? Why did you rate yourself that way? How can 2 Timothy 1:7 apply to people who are naturally shy?

3 At Rocky's apartment following their first date, Adrian says, "I don't know you well enough. I've never been in a man's apartment alone. ... I'm not comfortable. I should go." How should Rocky have responded? Why?

4 Rocky tries to rescue young Marie from the "yo-yos" on the street corner by explaining that she's developing a reputation that will follow her for years. Talk about his advice, including the statement, "You hang out with nice people, you get nice friends. ... You hang out with yo-yo people, you get yo-yo friends" (1 Corinthians 15:33, Proverbs 12:26).

5 All of the main characters want to be respected. How does each attempt to gain that respect? Why is it that respect can't be demanded; it must be earned?

6 Proverbs 20:3 says, "It is to a man's honor to avoid strife." Though Rocky is a fighter, he tends to avoid strife and protect others. Recall as many scenes as you can in which he shows mercy, compassion or forgiveness. Then ask, "Which instance impressed you most? Why?" Why does seeing Rocky extend grace to others make his shot at redemption that much easier to cheer?

Below: Rocky with his loan-shark boss



7 Paulie is boorish, bitter and childish. Why do you think Rocky remains friends with him? Adrian actually leaves home to escape her brother's abusiveness. Why is that smart? Why is she unwise to move in with Rocky? As her friend, what other options might you have suggested?

8 How do Rocky's rigorous workouts compare with the spiritual training prescribed in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27? What steps are you taking to succeed in becoming more like Christ? Rocky had to deny himself certain things to build strength and stamina. In accordance with Mark

8:34 and Hebrews 12:1, are there things God has been telling you to lay aside?

9 Apply Proverbs 16:18 to the braggadocious champ getting knocked down in the first round. Have you ever been humbled after getting a little cocky? What happened?

10 Rocky feels past prime due to wasted years and missed opportunities. Regardless of your age, can you relate? If you haven't already done so, resolve to start fresh. Draw encouragement from Philippians 3:13-14 and Joel 2:23-27. Then go for it!

Follow-Up Activity

No doubt your teen admired Rocky's ability to find beauty in the withdrawn, frumpy Adrian. In the weeks to come, look for opportunities to challenge your son or daughter to find beauty in ordinary things. Or better yet, things that have been broken or cast aside. For example, visit a used car lot, pick a vehicle at random and ask your teen to point out three cool things about it. The object is to get them past a potentially negative first impression, have them lay aside cynicism and a critical spirit, and focus on the positives. It might take them a while to answer your challenge. But the more they do this, the more it will come naturally, even when studying people.

Just for Fun

Because *Rocky* was shot on a tight budget (in just 28 days), the climactic bout was filmed backwards beginning with round 15. That allowed the actors to start out in heavy makeup and have it removed gradually until they reached the opening bell. —by Mick Silva and Bob Smithouser