

FROM THE DIRECTORS OF 'LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE'

BATTLE OF THE SEXES

BASED ON A TRUE STORY



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Dear Educator:

Based on real events in the life of the trailblazing athlete and activist Billie Jean King, the movie *Battle of the Sexes* addresses several highly debated issues of the 1970s, including gender equality, homophobia, and wage disparities. Although progress has been made in these areas since then, many of these challenges still exist today.

As educators, you play a significant role in not only introducing a variety of subjects for students to learn and explore, but also creating the safe spaces in which they can do so by promoting understanding and empathy. Because of the sensitive nature of the topics addressed in the film, it is important to provide students with a secure environment that encourages them to openly discuss their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment or repercussions.

The objective of this guide is to help provide information and resources that will build your students' knowledge of the history of women in sports, women's fight for equal pay, and the challenges facing the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) community. It is also intended to provide educators with a framework to assist in facilitating discussions on current issues in the United States and around the world, such as gender equality, women's and civil rights, sexism, and social justice.

This guide includes historical content, film-specific examples, key messaging, discussion questions, and a variety of activities, facts, quotes, and statistics. Through these projects, your students will acquire tools to better understand and address stigmas and stereotypes while exploring the social narrative around discriminatory biases.



Letter from Billie Jean King

When I played against Bobby Riggs at the Houston Astrodome in 1973, I was both an athlete and an activist.

The “Battle of the Sexes” was more about social change than tennis. Historically, it would become one of the defining moments in the women’s movement in the U.S., one of the defining moments in sports and one of the most important days of my life. Years later, Bobby and I both agreed that we made — and changed — history with that match. It was a win for me and for the Women’s Tennis Association (which had been founded earlier that year), and a win for all women — empowering them to stand for equality across all industries. It also created the first generation of men of the women’s movement — men who wanted their daughters to have the same rights and opportunities as their sons.

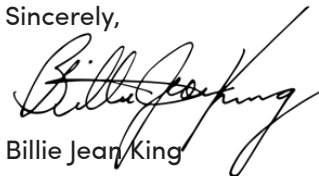
The film, *Battle of the Sexes*, is a biopic that dramatizes two important years in my career and sports history — 1970 when the Original 9 was formed and the birth of women’s professional tennis as we know it today and 1973, when I played Bobby Riggs in the Battle of the Sexes. I was honored by Emma Stone’s portrayal of that period of my life. I was 29 years old when I competed in the match, just one year older than Emma at the time she filmed the movie. I am thrilled that Emma’s generation, and audiences even younger, will have the opportunity

to see this film and discuss the prevailing issues of the time: sexism, pay inequality and the prejudices faced by women and the LGBTQ+ community, among them. And I am encouraged by the Women’s Sports Foundation, an organization that I founded close to 50 years ago, whose work is dedicated to addressing these issues and promoting change.

The brave women of the Original 9 signed a \$1 contract to join their own tour and effectively changed the course of sports history. Back then, our dream was threefold: we wanted any girl anywhere in the world to have a place to compete; feel appreciated for her accomplishments, and not just her appearance; and we wanted women to make a living competing in the field of their passion.

The students who watch the film and use this discussion guide in the classroom are living our dream now. I truly believe that you have to see it to be it! The vision for social justice and equality is ever-changing, but we have come a long way and that gives me tremendous pride. But we have so much more work to do, and I am hopeful you will join us for this journey.

Sincerely,



Billie Jean King

Billie Jean King Biography

International Tennis Federation



Named one of the “100 Most Important Americans of the 20th Century” by *Life* magazine and the first female athlete to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Billie Jean King is the founder of the Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative, the Women’s Tennis Association and the Women’s Sports Foundation, and part of the ownership groups of the Los Angeles Dodgers, Angel City FC and the Los Angeles Sparks.

In her legendary tennis career, King captured 39 Grand Slam singles, doubles and mixed doubles titles, including a record 20 Wimbledon championships. Her historic win over Bobby Riggs in the 1973 Battle of the Sexes, is one of the greatest moments in sports history. In June 2022, she

received France’s highest order of merit, the *Ordre national de la Légion d’honneur*, from President Macron, and was inducted into the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee Hall of Fame as a special contributor.

In 2020, Fed Cup, the world cup of women’s tennis, was renamed the Billie Jean King Cup, making it the first global team competition to be named after a woman. In 2019, King’s Southern California roots were recognized with the opening of the Billie Jean King Main Library in her hometown of Long Beach, California. In 2006, the home of the US Open was renamed the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in honor of her accomplishments on and off the court. In 2017, Fox Searchlight released the critically acclaimed film, *Battle of the Sexes*, which depicts the cultural and social impact of the groundbreaking match.

In 2018, King received a Lifetime Achievement Award as part of the prestigious BBC Sports Personality of the Year Awards. In 2021, she received the Laureus Lifetime Achievement Award and the *Sports Illustrated* Muhammad Ali Legacy Award. King serves on the board of the Women’s Sports Foundation, is an adidas Global Ambassador and is the Honorary Lifetime President of the Elton John AIDS Foundation and a past member of the President’s Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition. King is a *New York Times* best-selling author, and her memoir, *ALL IN: An Autobiography*, was published by Knopf in 2021 and released in paperback in 2023.

Introduction: Battle of the Sexes



Women all over the country and the world have been coming together to fight for equality. As the topic of gender equality continues to rise to the forefront through organizations, marches and demonstrations, it is important to reflect on the early years of the feminist movement and the lasting legacy of the pioneers who helped pave the way.

The film depicts the tumult of the 1970s feminist and gay rights movements in full swing. Changes in laws and policy marked substantial progress for both groups. Milestone wins for women included Title IX, a law which made it illegal for any education program receiving federal funding to discriminate on the basis of sex. This law directly increased women's access to education and entry to professional fields such as medicine, law, and business. The "Battle of the Sexes" match was a reflection of the social issues people were fighting for at this time.

In 1973, Billie Jean King (played by Emma Stone) defeated Bobby Riggs (played by Steve Carrell) in three sets, 6-4, 6-3, 6-3, in front of 30,000 spectators and more than 90 million television viewers in the Battle of the Sexes match at the Houston Astrodome. More than a tennis match, this event was a fight for equality at a time when society saw women as inferior to men. King's victory empowered women across the country by demonstrating that female athletes were just as talented and capable as male athletes and that they deserved the same respect. She set a precedent for women in sport and was influential in women's athletic participation and equitable pay. Most importantly, King was a catalyst for change for women everywhere and for generations to come.

The true story behind *Battle of the Sexes* is greater than sports. It is about a woman who defied odds, refused to settle, and became a champion for women and civil rights. Why does this story matter now? What does a tennis match that was contested almost five decades ago have to teach us today? Despite the progress that has been made, women have not reached parity in many areas of society. Participation numbers and salaries are not yet equal at all levels of sport, and in society as a whole. Homophobia in athletics is still present and stigmatizing. Continued sexism, stereotyping, and negativity surrounding women's sports still creates great challenges for the athletes of today. Although the movie is depicting a moment in sports history, it speaks to conversations about where America is as a country and society at present.



Equality and Equitable Pay



It is often hard to see the difference between equality and equity. Equality is treating everyone the same. Equity is a distribution of resources according to people's respective needs (Sun, "Equality Is Not Enough"). Knowing the difference is important to understanding King's match and the movement for equitable pay. In the movie, King discusses the pay gap with former men's World #1 tennis player and the head of the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) Jack Kramer (played by Bill Pullman). Although there has been progress made in pay equity since the 1970s, there is still a noticeable discrepancy among men and women in all professional fields. On average, women in the United States earn 79 cents for every dollar paid to men (Cranston, "Why Your 'Women Only Make 79 Cents To The Dollar' Statistic Is Wrong"). The gap for women of color is even wider, as they make 67 cents to every dollar as compared to their male counterparts. These important statistics are relevant to the fairness that King fought for nearly 50 years ago when the Battle of the Sexes match was played. Sport serves as a microcosm of society as it relates to the wage gap.

1. In the beginning of the movie, King talks on the phone with President Nixon. She is congratulated for her accomplishment of winning \$100,000 in a single season. She thanks him and then says she is "happy to be the first woman to do it."
 - What was the meaning of King bringing attention to her being the first woman to reach \$100,000?
 - This comes up again when someone asks, "Why can't women just be happy about winning \$100,000?" Why did the filmmaker choose to highlight this multiple times? What does this say about the mindset of society regarding pay equality at the time?
 - Can you name other women who have been the "first" in sports or in any other fields?
2. By the 1980s, some female tennis players were making more than \$100,000 per year, and by the 1990s, that number jumped into the millions. In 2007, through advocacy from Venus Williams and the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), the French Open and Wimbledon started offering equal prize money for men and women, following the example of the US Open and the Australian Open.
 - How do the strides made in women's professional tennis help female athletes in other sports?
 - Does closing the wage gap in professional sports help women in other professions, as well? If so, why or why not? Provide examples.

By the 1970s, the compensation in professional tennis was still showing a huge gender gap with men making 12 times the money as women, causing King and other women to boycott. The Original Nine women, along with the publisher of *World Tennis Magazine*, Gladys Heldman (played by Sarah Silverman), formed the Virginia Slims Circuit, which is known today as the Women's Tennis Association.

3. In the movie, King and Heldman confront Kramer about the difference in pay between the women's and men's prize money for the Championship. Kramer's argument was, "People pay to see the men play... They're the draw." King asks the question, "They are eight times more of a draw? You are offering them eight times the prize money you are offering the women; do we bring in an eighth of the crowd? They sold the exact same amount of tickets to the women's final as the men's."
 - Kramer tells King and Heldman, "They are simply more exciting to watch. They're faster and stronger and more competitive. It's just biology." Do you think Kramer's comments are views that are still shared today? What are other examples of these comments and beliefs that you have heard or seen in other fields?
 - Why is King's argument for pay equity important in this specific example? Why is the number of tickets sold significant?

4. The Original Nine women who formed the WTA and who chose to participate on the Virginia Slims Circuit took a picture holding a dollar. This dollar was the first payment made to the women, making it a professional tour.
 - What does the dollar symbolize?
 - While they are taking the picture, King whispers that they have all been kicked out of the United States Lawn Tennis Association (USLTA). Why did the dollar and the tour itself become significantly more important in that moment?
 - How would you describe the character traits of the women holding up the dollar and choosing to boycott, and why?
5. Minutes before the match against Riggs, King is responding to several reporters who shout questions behind her. One reporter asks her if she thinks women are better than men. She stops and says, "Do you think your dad is better than your mom? I'm not saying women are better than men. I'm saying we deserve respect."
 - How do King's actions throughout the movie align with her response?
 - Where else do you see examples of equality and equity today?

**See Activity #1 on page 23:
Equality and Equitable Pay**

Sexism



Sexism and gender stereotypes in sports have been present since women began participating and even contributed to the justification for not allowing them to participate before they were given the opportunity. Female athletes are often discussed in terms of the way they look rather than their athletic ability. The movie places this phenomenon in plain sight, such as when reporters say during the match, “She is walking more like a male than a female,” and when Riggs says he is going to play the role of “male chauvinist pig.” Unfortunately, female athletes today can still be subjected to sexist remarks from reporters, and gender norms and sexism remain prevalent beyond athletics in the media to society as a whole.

1. At a press conference depicted in the movie, Bobby Riggs says, “Don’t get me wrong. I love

women... in the bedroom and the kitchen. But these days they want to be everywhere. They want to be doing everything. Where is it going to end? Pretty soon us fellas aren’t going to be able to go to a ball game, or fishing, or have a drink after work. That’s what this whole women’s femme thing is about.”

- What do his comments say about society’s perception of women during the 1970s?
- In the film, Riggs is seen wearing outlandish costumes and making comments like, “Just want to give a heads up to the women. You have rights. A right to cook and a right to clean!” How else does Riggs play off common gender norms to draw more attention to the battle of a man vs. a woman?

"In the seventies we had to make it acceptable for people to accept girls and women as athletes. We had to make it okay for them to be active. Those were much scarier times for females in sports."

— Billie Jean King

- Mrs. Riggs is shown during the match not noticeably cheering for either side. Do you think she is cheering for King or her husband? Why?
2. When Margaret Court decides to play Riggs, the other members of the Virginia Slims Circuit are seen paying to watch it on televisions in the airport waiting area. Today, we are able to access news through a variety of platforms through the push of a button. Social media especially has changed the way we send and receive information, with the entire news landscape at our fingertips.
 - How has social media affected sexism and sports?
 - Have you seen examples of sexism in your school or community? What does it look like?
 - How can you play a role in changing sexist remarks around sports?
 3. The film contains a scene in which Riggs first challenges King to a match, and she declines.

It was not until Margaret Court agreed to play Riggs, against King's warning, and was defeated in what is known as the Mother's Day Massacre, that King changed her mind. In the movie, King is seen talking to her husband, Larry, on the phone and she says, "I have no choice. I have to play him."

- Why do you think it was so important for King to play this match following Court's defeat? What do the Virginia Slims Circuit players' reactions say about the impact of Court's loss?
 - What does this line about "no choice" say about her character and values?
 - How did King break barriers in society by breaking barriers in sport?
4. Riggs receives a sponsorship from Sugar Daddy and is paid \$20,000 to wear a suit promoting the candy brand. As he enters the arena, women wearing Sugar Daddy shirts and skirts accompany him. As King enters, shirtless men carry her in on a throne.
 - Why did they enter the arena this way?
 - Why was King willing to play along with the pageantry of the event?
 - How did playing into the gender stereotypes bring more attention to the match and ultimately King's victory?

**See Activity #2 on page 25:
Sexism in the Media**

LGBTQ+ Rights

In addition to her life on the tennis court, the movie offers a glimpse into King's personal life, including her struggles with her own sexuality. Her same-sex relationship with Marilyn Barnett (played by Andrea Riseborough) creates conflicts both in her marriage and within herself, forcing her to confront her sexual identity at a time when those who openly identified as LGBTQ+ faced derision, blacklisting, and even violence. Many in the LGBTQ+ community still face these challenges in the present day.

The gay rights movement in the 1970s was the beginning of the fight toward equality for the LGBTQ+ community in America, and the movie addresses the sports world's homophobic attitudes head on. Sports at that time were bound by traditional concepts of masculinity. The establishment did not tolerate homosexuality and would not for many years — LGBTQ+ athletes did not begin to go public with their sexuality en masse until well into the 1990s.

Prior to that, Dave Kopay, an NFL player, was the first athlete to come out publicly as a gay man in 1977. Renée Richards was an openly transgender woman tennis player. A few other athletes in the 1980s were outspoken about their homosexuality, including Olympic decathlete Tom Waddell, tennis player Martina Navratilova, and Billie Jean King.

As society was not yet ready to embrace LGBTQ+ people, LGBTQ+ athletes faced criticism and intolerance from commercial sponsors and the public. Since the 1990s, there have been many athletes who have spoken openly about

their sexuality in a variety of sports at all levels, including tennis.

Anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes have evolved over the past 50 years, but despite these changes, LGBTQ+ athletes still face several challenges.

1. Think about the political climate during King's time. Margaret Court says to her husband, "You know what she is, don't you?" Although the words gay or lesbian are never mentioned, it is implied. Court's husband responds, "Isn't she ashamed?"
 - Why do you think the word gay or lesbian is not used to describe King's relationship with Barnett in the movie?
 - What do the Courts' comments say about how the public viewed the LGBTQ+ community in the 1970s?
 - What sorts of stigmas were associated with the LGBTQ+ community in the film that are still prevalent today?
2. After King realizes she is attracted to Barnett, she states, "Whatever I may feel, I can't act on it. There is too much at stake."
 - What would King be risking by coming out at the time?
 - What does King's interpersonal conflict between her attraction to Barnett and her tennis career say about societal pressures and social norms?



3. Throughout the movie, the clothing stylist, Ted Tinling (played by Alan Cumming), who is aware of King and Barnett’s relationship, reminds her of social norms and how being gay was not yet accepted. At one point he states, “Best be careful. The world isn’t a forgiving place.”
- What did he mean by this statement?
 - At the end of the movie, King and the stylist share a moment after the match. He tells her, “Someday we will be free to be who we are and love who we love.” Do you think we have reached the “someday” that Tinling refers to? Why or why not?

Resource:
For more resources and curriculum, including a glossary of LGBTQ+ terms, see resources included in the back of the guide.

Diversity, Inclusion, and the Prevalence of Privilege

"Diversity is being invited to the party, inclusion is being asked to dance."

— Verna Myers

Diversity is used to differentiate groups of people from one another through ethnicity, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religion, among other things. Inclusion is making sure different groups of people are valued and included, and their needs met. Promoting diversity and inclusion in sports and the workplace ensures everyone gets a fair chance, breaks down barriers, and allows relationships to develop that may not have formed outside of a diverse environment. For example, looking at the movie, we see the importance of diversity and inclusion when Rosie Casals (played by Natalie Morales) is selected to be one of the commentators for the match. It allowed for a different perspective to be shared with the audience, and an opportunity to have a woman's voice heard.

1. Do you think Casals would have been given the opportunity to commentate if King, a woman, was not competing? Why or why not?
2. When Jack Kramer and King were speaking about her not wanting him to commentate the match, King said, "and have you tell the American public what to read into every serve, every point?" What did this say about King's view of the importance of having different opinions represented?

3. What were some differences between Casals' comments about Riggs and men, and Howard Cosell's comments about King and women? What were the similarities?
4. What other observations can you make after watching Casals' and Cosell's interaction onscreen during the broadcast?

Privilege is defined as advantages available only to some groups of people based on their membership in that group, rather than their individual merits. In other words, certain groups are treated differently based on norms that have been established by society. Privilege comes in many forms, several of which seem obvious, while others are more subtle. Some examples of privilege are based on gender, race, socioeconomic status, attractiveness, sexual orientation, or physical ability. Often, those who benefit from privilege are members of groups in positions of power. For example, men, Caucasians, and heterosexual people have inherent privilege based on their membership in these groups. Think about the scene at the country club where Riggs wagered bets with other club members. He wins everything from a car to thousands of dollars. This scene evokes the adage "good ol' boys' club" and can serve as a symbolic representation of privilege.

"For those accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression."

— Anonymous

- Can you name some ways that privilege affects the experiences of men and women in sport? Heterosexuals and LGBTQ+ people in sport? Caucasian people and people of color in sport?
 - Are there ways in which you feel you are treated differently because of your identity?
5. In an interview before the Battle of the Sexes match, Kramer said, "Business, sports, you name it. At the very top, it's a man's world."
 - How does this statement represent business and sports today?
 - Consider the scene when the men from the country club are watching the Battle of the Sexes. What were some of their reactions to the match? Based on their comments, how would you say their attitude toward King and women are in general?
 - How can those in majority groups help create opportunities for those in minority groups?
 6. Kramer represents a person of privilege in the movie. At one point, King says to him, "It's when we want a little bit of what you got, that's what you can't stand."
 - What are some examples of how this quote could resonate today?
 - Why is Kramer so resistant to women having equal pay as men?
 7. King tells a story to Marilyn Barnett about when she was a child playing tennis. King was told she could not be photographed because she did not have on a tennis dress.
 - Why do you think King was not allowed to be photographed simply because she was not wearing a dress?
 - How do you think King felt being singled out because she looked different? Have you ever been in a situation where you were singled out because of factors beyond your control? How did it make you feel?
 8. When King and the Original Nine were being interviewed at the radio station, the DJ asks them some questions. In the end, they invite listeners to come watch the women play.
 - Who specifically does King invite to come watch them play?
 - King says, "We're trying to get tennis away from the stuffy old country club sport." What does she mean by describing tennis this way? How does this example represent privilege and access?

**See Activity #3 on page 26:
Privilege**

Activism



Many of today's athletes and sports teams have played dual roles of activist and athlete, voicing their opinions about their desire for justice in various social movements. They have sat, kneeled, locked arms, and marched. They have worn T-shirts with popular hashtags addressing social issues and given speeches demanding justice during televised award shows. However, this is not the first time that athletes have used their status as a stage for social justice.

For decades, athletes have used their popularity and platforms to stand up for what they believe in. Athletes who choose to take political stances or comment on issues of social justice often risk their careers to do so.

- At the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, U.S. sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who won the gold and bronze medals, respectively, raised a black-gloved fist to salute human rights while the national anthem played.
 - In 2016, several WNBA players and teams started wearing black T-shirts with "Black Lives Matter" and other related hashtags. The Indiana Fever became the first sports team to unanimously take a knee during the national anthem in the first round of playoffs.
1. Billie Jean King is an activist for women's rights and the LGBTQ+ community, and an advocate for social justice. In the movie she says, "I'm going to be the best. That way I can really change things."

"No one changes the world who isn't obsessed."

— Billie Jean King

- Why did King feel she needed to be the best to influence change?
 - If she was not a world number one tennis player, do you think she would have had the same influence on women's and LGBTQ+ rights and equal pay? Why or why not?
 - What role do the Original Nine women of the Virginia Slims Circuit play? Would Billie Jean King have had the same impact without them? Would you consider them to be activists? Why or why not?
2. Some athletes' stardom on the playing field has carried over to social media, giving them millions of followers on Twitter, Instagram, and other outlets. NBA player LeBron James has 52.8 million followers on Twitter. Megan Rapinoe of the Seattle Reign women's soccer franchise has been outspoken about LGBTQ+ rights and took a knee in solidarity with former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick. The U.S. National Women's Hockey Team has had victories in the battle for pay equity and fair treatment in their sport. The U.S. Women's National Soccer Team had a big win after a long and difficult battle to secure equal pay for the men's and women's national teams. As the popularity of women's sports rises, so do

the athletes' social media followings, allowing their activism efforts to reach more people.

- How does social media broaden athletes' reach when it comes to their messages as activists?
 - How was media used during the movie to promote activism?
 - How do you think the media as depicted in the movie harmed or hurt the fight for women's rights?
3. Often athletes are criticized for actions that go against the norm, just as Billie Jean King was criticized for her personal life and her unwillingness to budge until equal pay for women was achieved.

How does it make you feel to see athletes and celebrities use their platform to advocate for social change? Is it helpful or hurtful to social movements? Why or why not?

- How does the involvement of athletes in political activism change your view of events and/or certain social movements?
- Are athletes held to a different standard than the rest of the population? Why or why not?
- After King successfully defeats Riggs in the Battle of the Sexes, she goes to the locker room and takes time to sit alone. What does this scene say about her victory? How would you feel if you were her in that moment?

**See Activity #4 on page 27:
Activism**

Title IX: The Fight for Equality

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

– Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

Although the advent of Title IX was not addressed in the film, the law had a huge impact on women in sports and on society overall. The 37-word civil rights law made it illegal in American education to discriminate on the basis of sex. Its intended goal was to create access and opportunities for the underrepresented sex, which has historically been women. The law protects the interests of both men and women in all areas of education and programs, including sports.

1. In 1974, Ann Meyers Drysdale was the first woman to receive a four-year scholarship when she committed to UCLA for basketball. This was a luxury not afforded to King as she was denied the opportunity to compete in college on a scholarship prior to the passing of Title IX. King helped pave the way for the women who came after her.
 - How was the 1973 Battle of the Sexes influential on the timing of the first four-year scholarship awarded to a woman?
 - How does King's push for women's equality impact female athletes today?
2. Title IX is in place to protect all students, providing equal opportunities in all areas of education. Title IX allowed for women's sports participation to become more prevalent, thus challenging gender stereotypes such as the ones displayed by Riggs and male broadcasters in the film.
 - Name a few of the gender stereotypes that are addressed in the film.
 - How does Title IX impact you and your school through sports, activities, clubs, etc.?

Closing: Pressure is a Privilege



Billie Jean King is one of the most iconic figures in history, not only in the world of sports, but for our society as a whole. The match that she played has been influential and continues to mirror the battle for equality over the past several decades. Looking forward, there have been many people that were impacted by the famous Battle of the Sexes and it will continue to have a place in history for years to come. It proved to be a catalyst for change in the women's movement, LGBTQ+ rights, and advocacy for civil rights. Sports as well have become a sounding board for activism and the fight for social justice. We can find examples all around us using sports as a lens to teach life lessons and we can continue the movement for equality in this forum and

in society as a whole. As you bring your discussion of the film to a close, here are a few final questions to pose:

1. What are pressing social issues of today that we are battling?
2. Who, or what, has inspired you to make change, take a stand, or use your voice?
3. What is one small change you can make today to create a big change for the future?

"Pressure is a privilege ... it's what you do with it that matters."

— Billie Jean King

About the Women's Sports Foundation

The Women's Sports Foundation is proud to author the official film discussion guide for the *Battle of the Sexes* movie, produced by Fox Searchlight Pictures.

The Women's Sports Foundation exists to enable girls and women to reach their potential in sport and life. We are an ally, an advocate and a catalyst. Founded by Billie Jean King in 1974, we strengthen and expand participation and leadership opportunities through research, advocacy, community programming and a wide variety of collaborative partnerships. From its inception to Title IX's 50th anniversary in 2022, WSF has invested over \$100 million in these impact efforts, helping to shape the lives

of millions of youth, high school and collegiate student-athletes, elite athletes and coaches. We're building a future where every girl and woman can #KeepPlaying and unlock the lifelong benefits of sport participation. All girls. All women. All sports.® To learn more about the Women's Sports Foundation, please visit www.WomensSportsFoundation.org or connect with us through social media on Facebook: Facebook.com/WomensSportsFoundation, Twitter: [@WomensSportsFdn](https://twitter.com/WomensSportsFdn), Instagram: [@WomensSportsFoundation](https://www.instagram.com/WomensSportsFoundation), TikTok: [@womenssportsfoundation](https://www.tiktok.com/@womenssportsfoundation), LinkedIn: LinkedIn.com/company/women's-sports-foundation, or YouTube: [@WomensSportsFDN](https://www.youtube.com/WomensSportsFDN).



Resources

The Official Website of Billie Jean King

www.billiejeanking.com

A champion on the court, a crusader for social justice and women's equality in sports, and a visionary whose legacy is ever-evolving, Billie Jean King has secured her place in history.

Women's Sports Foundation Advocacy Resources

www.WomensSportsFoundation.org/advocate

Explore WSF's resources on a wide variety of topics related to women's sports, gender equity and diversity.



The Equity Project®

www.WomensSportsFoundation.org/the-equity-project/

The Equity Project, powered by WSF, is a movement of individuals and organizations that aims to impact participation, policy, representation and leadership in sports in sustainable and measurable ways. Join us by taking the pledge to ensure a future where we are no longer chasing equity, but living it fully.

National Girls & Women in Sports Day® (NGWSD)

www.ngwsd.org

A vibrant movement celebrated annually, NGWSD honors the achievements of girls and women in sports and inspires them to play and be active to realize their full power.

**The date of NGWSD varies from year-to-year, but it generally falls on the first Wednesday of February. However, participating programs are encouraged to plan events throughout the month, schedule permitting, to extend the celebration of the achievements of women and girls in sports.*

Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

www.glsen.org

Every day GLSEN works to ensure that LGBTQ+ students are able to learn and grow in a school environment free from bullying and harassment. GLSEN provides developmentally appropriate resources for educators to use throughout their school community. [Educators can use this resource to access a glossary of LGBTQ+ terms.](#)

Title IX Timeline

This timeline gives an in depth look at historical events leading up to and following the passing of Title IX. This can be used to further discussion surrounding Title IX and its impact on education and sport. For more information, visit <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/advocacy/history-of-title-ix>

October 13, 1967	<p>President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Executive Order 11375, which prohibits federal contractors from employment practices that discriminate on the basis of sex.</p> <p>This laid the groundwork for future gender-equity legislation signed five years later.</p>
1971	<p>The Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW), which functioned in the equivalent manner as the NCAA, was founded. It provided institutional membership and elected representation in addition to designing, sponsoring, governing, and sanctioning women's sports and championships.</p>
June 23, 1972	<p>President Richard Nixon signed Title IX into federal law.</p>
September 20, 1973	<p>The Battle of the Sexes: Before 30,000 spectators and millions of viewers on television, Billie Jean King defeated Bobby Riggs in tennis at the Astrodome in Houston.</p>
July 21, 1975	<p>The Department of Health, Education and Welfare issued regulations regarding Title IX enforcement, particularly as they apply to athletics. High Schools and colleges that receive federal funds are given three years to comply with the regulations.</p>
December 11, 1979	<p>The Office for Civil Rights, which enforces Title IX, issued a policy outlining ways in which institutions can prove they are Title IX compliant. This was the first real guidance for colleges and universities on how to establish compliance.</p>
1980	<p>Five Yale students filed a lawsuit against the university, claiming sexual harassment of female students was equivalent to sex discrimination, as it hindered the students' ability to partake in education.</p>
1981-82	<p>In the 1981-82 academic year, the NCAA integrated women's athletics and crowned Division I national champions for the first time in multiple sports. The NCAA became the primary governing body for women's intercollegiate athletics, making the AIAW decide to close their doors.</p>
March 22, 1988	<p>Congress overrode a veto by President Ronald Reagan and passed the Civil Rights Restoration Act, which overturned the Supreme Court's ruling in <i>Grove City College v. Bell</i> in 1984. The ruling had been a setback for Title IX, resulting in some schools subsequently "cutting" their recently added women's teams and the Office for Civil Rights canceling 23 ongoing investigations.</p> <p>The law reversed the 1984 decision and mandated that any institution receiving federal funds must comply with Title IX in all of its programs and activities, including athletics.</p>
October 20, 1994	<p>Congress passed the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act. This meant Federally funded coed institutions were now required to submit annual reports about their athletics programs. For the first time, the public was able to access gender equity data for college athletics programs.</p>

Sport Participation by Gender

Chart A below reflects participation numbers for boys and girls (and percentages of high school athletes) in high school sports before and after the passing of Title IX. The data in Chart B specifies NCAA college sports participation for men and women between 1981-82 and 2021-22. Charts C and D show gender equity among men and women in collegiate sports. The year 1993 is significant as

this was the first time the National Collegiate Athletic Association took an in-depth look at the success of Title IX among its membership, realizing it was not meeting the standards laid out by Title IX.

These charts give students a visual of the impact Title IX had at both the high school and collegiate levels between both sexes.

Chart A: H.S. Sports Participation, 1971-72 and 2021-22

	Boys	Girls
1971-72	3,666,917 (93%)	294,015 (7%)
2021-22	4,376,582 (57.5%)	3,241,472 (42.5%)

Source: 2021-22 High School Athletics Participation Survey
Conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations

Chart B: NCAA College Sports Participation, 1981-82 and 2021-22

	Men	Women
1981-82	167,055 (69.5%)	73,351 (30.5%)
2021-22*	298,109 (56.5%)	229,620 (43.5%)

*Numbers reflect championship, emerging and non-championship sports in all three NCAA Divisions.

Source: NCAA Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report

Chart C: NCAA Gender Equity Chart, 1993

	Male	Female
Participation Opportunities	70%	30%
Operating Budgets	77%	23%
Athletic Scholarship Fund	70%	30%
Recruiting Budget	83%	17%

Source: Final Report of the Gender Equity Task Force, 1993 p. 1

Chart D: NCAA Division I Gender Equity Chart, 2022

	Male	Female	Coed/ Unallocated
Participation Opportunities (2020)	52.9%	47.1%	
Total Expenses (2018-19)	44%	21%	35%
Athletic Scholarship Fund (2018-19)	52%	45%	3%
Recruiting Budget (2018-19)	71%	28%	1%

Source: NCAA Title IX 50th: The State of Women in College Sports (2022)

Activity #1: Equality and Equitable Pay



Materials Needed: For this activity you will need print-outs of each article, highlighters, pens, and paper.

Time: 30-45 Minutes

Goal: To understand the ideas, issues, concepts, and values reflected in the text as they relate to equality and equitable pay.

Instructions:

Note to Educator: Separate students in working groups of 5-7. Give each group an article to read. You may also choose your own articles or have students bring their own.

1. Read through the entire article without stopping to think about any particular section. Pay attention to your first impression as to what the

reading is about. Look for main points then go back and reread it.

2. The second time you read it:
 - a. Underline major points statements that stand out.
 - b. Circle key words or phrases.
 - c. Write, in the margin, questions that come to mind.
3. In your groups, take turns discussing the major points, words, and phrases you underlined. Have one person be a recorder. After everyone has shared, highlight words, phrases, and questions that came up more than once.
4. Each group will do a share out listing the common themes discussed in their group.

Discussion Questions:

1. What was your first impression from reading the title? Did your initial opinion change after reading the article? What about after the group discussion?
2. Is the gender pay gap in professional sports what you thought it would be? Worse? Better?
3. How does this happen in other professions outside of professional sports? In the world? How does this connect to overall gender equality?

Articles:

Serena Williams Says “It Takes Time” to Address Gender Pay Equality in the Sports World (Christopher Brito) <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/serena-williams-sports-gender-inequality>

Gender Pay Gap Is Leading to Dangerous Realities for Our Athletes (Nona Lee) <https://www.sportsbusinessjournal.com/en/SB-Blogs/COVID19-OpEds/2022/08/22-Lee>

U.s. Soccer Has Equal Gender Pay. Will Other Sports Follow? (Khristopher J. Brooks) <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/gender-pay-gap-sports-soccer-tennis-basketball>

House of Representatives Passes Equal Pay Bill for U.S. Women Athletes (Associated Press) https://www.espn.com/soccer/story/_/id/37670759/haaland-liverpool-serie-resurgence-best-storylines-season-end

In These Sports, Equal Pay Day Is Years Away (Alex Azzi) <https://onherturf.nbcsports.com/2021/03/24/equal-pay-day-women-sports-gender-pay-gap>

This Is Not a Moment in Women’s Basketball. It’s Momentum. (Talya Minsberg) <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/03/sports/ncaabasketball/womens-basketball-march-madness.html>

‘It Was a Lot of Hard Work’: Thanks to Billie Jean King, USTA Led the Way on Equal Pay 50 Years Ago (Christine Brennan) <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/columnist/brennan/2023/03/14/billie-jean-king-usta-led-way-equal-pay-1973/11468806002>

Additional Resource:

A Look at Male and Female Professional Athlete Salaries (Adelphi University) <https://sportsmanagement.adelphi.edu/resources/infographics/a-look-at-male-and-female-professional-athlete-salaries/>

Activity #2: Sexism in the Media

Materials Needed: Access to the Internet, including media sites, or printed news and magazine articles.

Time: 30–45 Minutes

Goal: To allow students to use objectivity and inductive reasoning to identify signs of sexism in the media, increase awareness, and form opinions about how men and women are covered.

Instructions: Look up or clip out images, articles, or social media postings covering men and women. Compare your findings and put together a short presentation of examples of what you think are good or nonsexist advertisements as well as other media that show sexism toward men and/or women.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you notice any differences in the way men and women are described in the media?
2. Does the media encourage sexist opinions toward women?
3. Is sexism a social or individual issue?
4. Are female athletes subjected to sexist comments more than women in other professions?
5. How can the media work to change sexism?

Additional Resources:

How Adding an 'M' Highlights Sexism and Gender Bias in Sports (Alex Azzi) <https://onherturf.nbcsports.com/2022/04/28/add-the-m-mens-sports-campaign>

Sportswomen Share Experiences of Sexism and the Reasons They Do Not Report It (Becky Grey) <https://www.bbc.com/sport/53593465>



Activity #3: Privilege

Materials Needed: Scrap paper and a recycling bin.

Time: 20 Minutes

Goal: To recognize the prevalence of privilege in its many forms; gain awareness of the privilege students have and the difference it can make in life; and develop empathy for those who do not have the same privileges.

Instructions:

Note to Educator: Instruct each student to take out a piece of scrap paper and crumble it up. Move a recycling bin to the front of the room. Each student represents a member of society. Each member has a chance to become wealthy and move into the upper class. In order to move into the upper class, each student will have to throw their scrap paper into the recycling bin from where they are sitting.

The students in the front of the class room will have a higher chance of making their piece of paper in the bin. The closer the student is to the recycling bin is representative of privilege and the advantages it provides. The lesson here is that most students in the front of the classroom will not complain about where they are seated, as they only see the goal in front of them. The students in the back may complain about how unfair the activity is because they are further back and see obstacles (other students and distance) in front of the goal.

Discussion Questions:

1. Was this activity fair? Why? Why not?
2. What are some examples of privilege in society? (For Example: Being right-handed, receiving an education, having transportation, having physical ability).
3. How does privilege affect how you perceive and react to your surroundings?

Additional Resources:

Video of Activity <https://youtu.be/2KlvmuxzYE>

Privilege Walk Lesson Plan <https://peacelearner.org/2016/03/14/privilege-walk-lesson-plan/>



Activity #4: Activism in Sport

Materials Needed: Access to social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok), pens, and paper

Time: 30 minutes

Goal: To gain insight of athletes' activism in sports, what it looks like, what it means, how it's changed, and how it affects social opinion.

Instructions:

Note to Educator: Show the class examples of athletes today who have a political presence on social media (For example: Colin Kaepernick, NFL; Layshia Clarendon, WNBA; Megan Rapinoe, USWNT; LeBron James, NBA). You can have students write everything out, or it can be a modern-day art project. Have students create sample tweets or cut out pictures representing posts.

Research an athlete who used their platform for social justice and activism prior to the existence of social media (for example: Billie Jean King, Muhammed Ali, John Carlos, etc.).

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the differences between the ways athletes engaged in activism before social media and the ways athletes engage with activism now?
2. What types of tweets, TikToks, Facebook statuses, and Instagram pictures would they post?
3. Do you see any political issues that are still relevant today from the time when your athlete was competing?



Additional Resources:

11 Times Sports and Politics Merged to Take Us out of Our Comfort Zone (Laura Depta) <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2660522-11-times-sports-and-politics-merged-to-take-us-out-of-our-comfort-zones>

Pro Athletes Are Now Political Activists, and You'd Better Get Used to It (Andy Frye) <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andyfrye/2020/08/27/pro-athletes-are-now-political-activists-and-you-d-better-get-use-to-it>

'Sport Is Political.' How Athletes Are Keeping Human Rights Center Stage at the Olympics (Joshua Barajas) <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/sport-is-political-how-athletes-are-keeping-human-rights-center-stage-at-the-olympics>

Acknowledgments

The Women's Sports Foundation is proud to author the official film discussion guide for the *Battle of the Sexes* movie produced by Fox Searchlight Pictures.

The Women's Sports Foundation exists to enable girls and women to reach their potential in sport and life. We are an ally, an advocate and a catalyst. Founded by Billie Jean King in 1974, we strengthen and expand participation and leadership opportunities through research, advocacy, community programming and a wide variety of collaborative partnerships. From its inception to Title IX's 50th anniversary in 2022, WSF has invested over \$100 million in these impact efforts, helping to shape the lives of millions of youth, high school and collegiate student-athletes, elite athletes and coaches. We're building a future where every girl and woman can #KeepPlaying and unlock the lifelong benefits of sport participation. All girls. All women. All sports.® To learn more about the Women's Sports Foundation, please visit www.WomensSportsFoundation.org.

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BATTLE ^{OF} THE SEXES



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