

Do Now

Sex in the media and its impact on our values

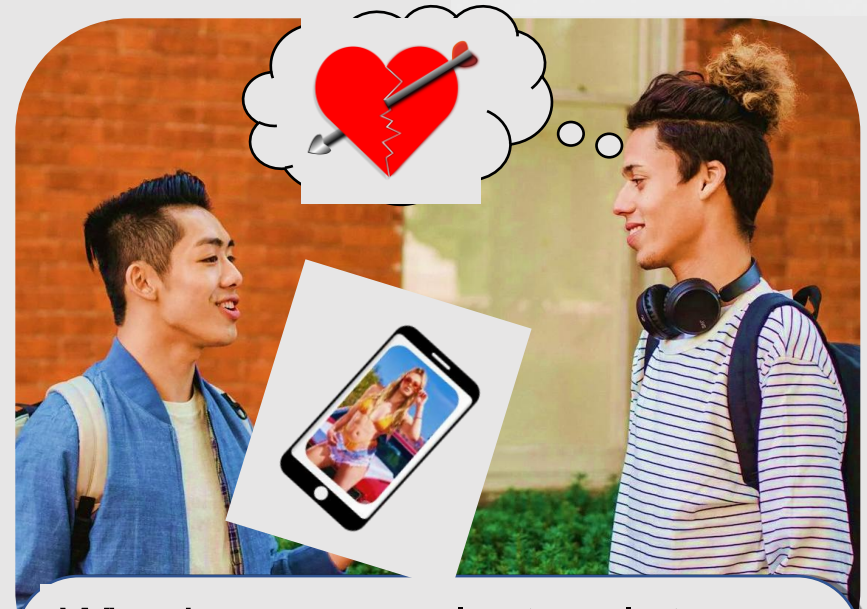


Jamie was discussing his latest love rejection with his friend, Matt.

'I asked if I could kiss her - she said "eww, no," and turned away.' Jamie sighed.

Matt was surprised; 'the more *femoids* say they don't want you, the more it means they really do. I've seen it happen loads of times. They always give in.'

Discuss: Where's Matt got this idea from? Why is he calling women 'femoids'? Is this dangerous thinking?



Why do some people struggle to differentiate between online content and real-life experiences?

I think some people struggle because...

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Learning outcomes:

Describe how sex, relationships and sexuality are usually represented in the media and the impact this can have on young people.

Objectification – Degrading someone to the status of an object.

Aesthetic norms – What the majority of people perceive to be common physical traits.

Body image - a person's perception of the aesthetics or sexual attractiveness of his or her own body.

Jamie was right to respect his love-interest's wishes when she didn't want to kiss him. He was also right to ask first – not only does this allow someone to give consent and shows respect but also helps save Jamie from an even more embarrassing moment.

Unfortunately, Matt is using language he has read on incel or misogynistic sites. He is also giving the worst advice possible, which is encouraging sexual harassment. With these attitudes, Jamie is likely to find a partner, whereas Matt is not. Today we'll investigate further where misinformed attitudes, like Matt's, come from.





Did you know....?

Reports suggest that UK teenagers are having less sexual experiences than previous generations and are starting sexual relationships later than they did in previous decades.

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Read the information in your booklet, 'Sex and the Media' and complete the tasks in the space provided.

<p>Sex and the Media</p> <p>How is sex portrayed in the media? The portrayal of sex in the media is a huge topic. For a start, the term 'media' covers a wide range of specific outlets, such as television, magazines, online content, videos, advertising and social media. Each of these could be studied individually and you would find great diversity in the portrayal of a topic like sex within and between each channel. Therefore, it's important to note that questions like 'how is sex portrayed in the media?' are extremely broad in scope, and any answers to these kinds of questions will necessarily be general.</p>  <p>There is a famous slogan associated with advertising, particularly in the 20th century onwards: 'sex sells'. This refers to the idea that portraying images of a suggestive or sexual nature and associating these with a product will increase the product's appeal. Some people use evolutionary psychology to suggest that males in particular respond to the visual cues of sexually available females, because of their need to identify and mate with numerous partners – this is of course debatable. If you look at all of the adverts that you are exposed to in your typical day, it would be very likely that at least one of these was using some aspect of the 'sex sells' technique. However, so many adverts have used the 'sex sells' technique that it can no longer be relied upon to be effective; hence, as adverts are always looking to stand out from the crowd, we may see a decline in sexually suggestive advertising (its effect also appears to be in decline as more people object to the objectification of its subjects and emphasis on looks). Then again, with a theme as perennially popular as sex, it may be that the link between sex and products merely evolves.</p> <p><u>Question to consider: can you recall seeing sexual imagery used in advertising that you have seen lately?</u></p>	<p>Sex has also played a key role in film and television as a powerful means of telling a story as part of a wider narrative. In the post #metoo era, there are now guidelines for TV and film professionals on how to film sex scenes (and to decide whether or not sex scenes are necessary for their story), all of which are designed to protect the actors involved. There are protections for viewers as well: no sexually explicit content can be shown before the 'watershed', which is 9pm, a time when (it is expected) young children will not be watching. However, sexual content in TV shows has risen notably in the last decade, and with the advent of on demand platforms like Netflix, where content can be accessed at any time of the day (assuming parental locks are off), it is becoming easier to be exposed to sexual content in TV and films, regardless of your age.</p>  <p><u>Question to consider: do you think that being exposed to sexual content in TV shows could be beneficial or harmful to a teenager?</u></p> <p>Adult films, also known as pornographic films or 'porn', are less regulated than mainstream TV and film. In fact, as long as the performers are over the age of 18 and the material does not class as 'extreme pornography' (such as life-endangering activity, paedophilia, bestiality or necrophilia), there is little to no standard regulation (laws which do involve 'extreme pornography' would be treated as crimes). Professionally produced adult films are required to be certified by the British Board of Film Classification. However, with the rise of the internet, many 'amateur' pornographic films have been created by people with their own recording equipment, for example camera phones, and then uploaded to websites where their videos can be accessed publicly, without being classified. Again, any content which involved 'extreme pornography' would be treated as a crime if reported.</p> <p><u>Question to consider: would more regulation in the porn industry be beneficial for society?</u></p>	<p>The porn industry is estimated to be worth over \$13 billion. In surveys, the majority of people report using porn at least occasionally or more often. Around 25% of all the videos uploaded to sites are amateur videos. All of these statistics have an impact on the way young people can find themselves pressured into looking and behaving in certain ways when it comes to sex. For example, the prevalence of porn and its stock characters and conventions can lead to people feeling pressured to look like porn stars (which can involve body modifications ranging from body hair removal to surgery). The popularity of misogynistic search terms and even innocuous terms like 'lesbian' can have a particular impact on women and the way they are seen, especially in terms of objectification. The conventions of porn may influence some people to think that sex has to be degrading, demeaning, violent or any number of other negative qualities. The increasing number of amateur porn films can spill over into problematic areas such as revenge porn, and the permanence of the films can also have consequences for the person's public profile in the future.</p> <p><u>Question to consider: to what extent do you think that porn is affecting today's young people?</u></p> <p>Then there is of course social media. This recent development in technology has allowed for greater communication and sharing of information, but it has also brought with it a pressure to project certain representations of oneself, especially representations which are seen as positive. This in turn can create a sense of conformity to aesthetic norms, which are increasingly influenced by porn. On the other hand, social media is an excellent resource for</p>	<p>Inspirational figures and awareness of the body positivity movement, or LGBT+ representation.</p> <p><u>Question to consider: what are the positive and negative ways that sex is represented in your experience/understanding of social media?</u></p> <p>Finally, today we also have to consider the problems caused by deep fakes and AI generated pornography. The youth of today face significant challenges due to deepfakes and AI-generated pornography, including privacy violations, cyberstalking, and exploitation. AI can create realistic but fake explicit content without consent, leading to reputational damage, blackmail, and psychological distress. Young people, especially women, are vulnerable to having their images manipulated and circulated online, often without their knowledge. The easy accessibility of AI tools also fuels unethical content creation, blurring the lines between real and fake, and fostering unrealistic expectations about intimacy. The rapid spread of such content across social media makes it difficult to control, amplifying the risks of harassment and long-term harm.</p> <p><u>Question to consider: why are deep fakes and AI generated pornography so damaging?</u></p>
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Sex and the Media

Sex is shown in many parts of the media – TV, films, advertising, magazines, social media and online videos. Each of these shows sex in different ways, which can shape how people think about it.

Advertising

For decades, advertisers have used the idea that “**sex sells.**” Images that seem attractive or suggestive are used to draw attention to a product.

Many people now criticise this for objectifying people, and it is less common than before, but sex is still often linked to selling products.

Have you seen adverts recently that use sexual imagery?



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TV and Film

Sex is often included in stories on TV and in films.

Since the #MeToo movement, there are stricter guidelines for filming sex scenes to protect actors.

In the UK, explicit scenes cannot be shown on broadcast TV before the 9 pm watershed, but streaming platforms like Netflix make such content easier to access at any time.

Do you think seeing sexual content in TV shows helps or harms teenagers?



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Pornography

Porn is a huge global industry, worth billions of dollars. Some is produced professionally and follows legal rules (e.g. actors must be over 18), but a large amount is amateur and easily shared online. Porn often presents unrealistic or harmful ideas about sex and bodies, and can lead to pressure, objectification or unsafe expectations. Problems such as revenge porn and the permanent online record of shared videos can have lasting effects.

How do you think porn affects young people today?



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Social Media

Social media influences how people see themselves and others. It can encourage pressure to look a certain way or act in ways shaped by porn culture.

At the same time, it can be positive – sharing messages about body positivity, healthy relationships and LGBT+ inclusion.

What positive and negative messages about sex have you seen on social media?



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AI and Deepfakes

A new problem is the use of AI to create fake explicit images or videos of real people.

This can be used to bully, threaten or embarrass someone without their consent.

It can harm reputations, cause psychological distress and is often hard to remove once shared online.

Why are deepfakes and AI-generated porn so damaging?



The positives of the portrayal of sex in social media

You have been given a bingo card. Whilst listening carefully to the two students, you need to cross out all the **positives** mentioned in the video clip. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNCNWk2IHrl>

Bodies of different shapes are better represented on social media in a sex-positive way.	Social media can open you up to trolls and negativity with regards to information about sex.	It can provide a 'safe space' for young people discovering information about sex.
It can make it easier for LGBT+ people to find each other.	Guides to types of sex are available which aren't influenced by porn.	It all depends on who you choose to follow.
Can still provide very controversial content.	It's still mostly a 'slim bodied' environment.	It can be used for education.

The positives of the portrayal of sex in social media

I hope you read the instructions carefully 😊

Remember, we were only crossing out the positives that we heard – as seen below.

Class discuss: Do you think the interviewees mostly held a positive or negative view of how sex is portrayed on social media?



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Useful helplines and charities:

[Young Minds](#). Child and adolescent mental health charity for teens struggling with any subject. Call: 0808 802 5544

[Teen Line | Teens Support hotline - Connect, talk, get help!](#) Teen Line's highly trained teen listeners provide support, resources and hope to any teen who is struggling.

[NEW Young Persons Advice Guide - Let's Talk about It \(letstalkaboutit.nhs.uk\)](#) New young persons RSE advice guide from the NHS



Reporting a Concern at Thornden School

- It is important to us that all of you feel safe, happy and belong at Thornden.
- We also know that sometimes it is not as easy as simply telling a member of staff
- It could be:
 - A friend you are worried about
 - Someone being unkind to you
 - Something you have heard and think we should know

How can you report anything you are worried about?

- Speak to a member of staff or parent / carer
- Visit the Well Being Den or Head of Year area
- On Satchel each week you will be sent a link to a form to share any worries you have
- On our school website homepage there is a 'Report a Concern' link.
- In the Student Bulletin there is a 'Report a Concern' link
- On all school desktops there is a 'Report a Concern' logo to click and report anything

Need Support? You're Not Alone



If anything in today's lesson has affected you, or you want to talk to someone, there is help available.

Mental Health & Low Mood

YoungMinds – <https://www.youngminds.org.uk>

Kooth – <https://www.kooth.com>

Mind – <https://www.mind.org.uk>

Apps That Can Help

Calm – For mindfulness and sleep.

Headspace – Meditation and stress relief.

Clear Fear – Manage anxiety (designed for young people).

MeeTwo – Anonymously talk to other teens, moderated by experts.

Talk to Someone

Your Tutor or Head of Year – We're here to help.

Wellbeing Team and School Nurse

Report a Concern on Satchel

Safeguarding Team with the Purple lanyards

Eating Concerns

Beat Eating Disorders –

<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk>

NHS Live Well – Eating Disorders –

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/eating-disorders/>

Healthy Lifestyle

NHS Every Mind Matters – <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters>

Change4Life – <https://www.nhs.uk/change4life>