



*A study guide for the film*

## **ROSEY GRIER: The Courage To Be Me**

Subject areas: English, Drug Abuse Prevention, Health, Guidance, Career Ed., Contemporary Problems, Social Studies, Psychology, Continuation School

Level: el, JH, SH  
Length: 23 minutes

Produced by  
Dimension Films

### **CONTENT**

This is the story of a man's life; a story about overcoming lack of confidence and fear and failure; a film about "not giving up."

Today Rosey Grier is known for his achievements in football, show business, politics and community work. But growing up in poverty, he often knew rejection, discouragement and failure. In high school, students ridiculed his thick Georgia dialect, and he was afraid even to speak in class. Overcoming that fear — through perseverance — became an important thread in his life. Though he faces discouragement and failure again and again — in school, in pro-football, with Robert Kennedy — Rosey learns to overcome fear, to believe in himself, to refuse to give up until he succeeds.

Presented by

**CHURCHILL FILMS**  
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## PURPOSE

To provide a positive model which can inspire students toward effort, responsibility, and persistence. To motivate oral language, reading, writing, and thinking about the following concepts:

### Self-Esteem

Believing in yourself — as a person of value and a person of potential — is valuable in achieving goals and creating a rewarding life.

Taking positive action tends to increase self-esteem.

### Persistence

Failure need not be a stopping point. It can, in fact, be viewed as a learning experience. Continuing to strive, even after failure and rejection, increases the chances for eventual success.

### Effort

Effort, or lack of it, can have a direct effect on the rewards a person receives. We are not helpless.

### Responsibility

We can exert control over — take responsibility for — what we become. Our lives are not determined solely by circumstances.

Even when extreme barriers and limitations exist, it is possible to create a rewarding and satisfying life.

Defining and pursuing your own goals — especially when you feel rejected or unsupported — requires courage.

## Before the film

Have a brief discussion about shyness. Have you ever felt shy and afraid to speak out in a group or in a class? What causes people to be shy? What do you think they fear?

Using this as an introduction, explain that the film tells the true story of a man's life, from age five to forty-five. The man is Rosey Grier, a famous football player and entertainer. Ask the class during the film to form an opinion of why Rosey was shy, and especially about how he overcame fear and feelings of failure.

Note: Depending on the sophistication of your class, you may need to explain that "Bobby" Kennedy, who was important in Rosey's life, was the brother of President John Kennedy. Bobby ran for president, but during the campaign, like his brother, he too was assassinated.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR WRITING

- How did Rosey overcome his lifelong fear of speaking before a group?
- Rosey wanted this film made. What do you feel he wanted us to learn from his experience?
- What does Rosey mean when he says, "You can never fail if you never quit."?
- How did Rosey's school years influence the rest of his life?
- Rosey says, "I played the game hard, and I played it fair." Do you agree with his idea that "Any fun thing you do — to cheat at it — takes the fun out of it"? Why? (Give examples.)
- What would you think Rosey values most in life now? (List some values.) What experiences probably influenced his values?
- Several times Rosey faced rejection, failure and discouragement (speaking in class, ignored by family, college grades, traded by team, death of Kennedy). How did Rosey respond to these situations? What other ways do people sometimes respond? How might these responses have changed his life?

## WRITING ACTIVITIES

### Sensory Descriptive

Imagine: You are Rosey, you are in high school, and you have been keeping a journal. On one page, *describe your feelings* about being a popular football star, yet being ignored at times by your family.

Choose a scene from the film. Describe either:  
— one character (describe the person's appearance, personality, and how they act and feel in one scene).



- one setting or place (describe how it looks; the mood, the sight, sound, smell and touch of it).

### **Imaginative Narrative**

Rosey's hobbies include needlepoint and quilting. Describe a *debate* between Rosey and a person who believes that "sewing is only for females."

Imagine that Rosey has been asked to do a public service TV commercial urging young people to complete their schooling. You are his writer. Write the *script*.

### **Practical/Informative**

You have just seen an ad in the newspaper. Rosey Grier is hiring students to assist in his youth program. Write a *letter* to him, inquiring about details of the job. Also tell him something about you, your abilities and background. Observe business letter conventions.

You are a reporter for the school newspaper. Rosey Grier will be entertaining on campus to raise money for his youth work. Write an *article* announcing the event. Include some biographical information on Rosey.

### **Expository/Analytical**

What personal qualities of Rosey Grier do you admire most? *Why? Explain* how Rosey Grier was able to overcome fear and insecurity. *Summarize* Rosey's career in one paragraph.

## **RESEARCH ASSIGNMENTS**

Social Science:

In the 1960's the assassinations of these three leaders shocked our nation: John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Robert Kennedy. What were the circumstances surrounding each? What were some of the effects on our society?

Many young people in our society struggle with the same decisions Rosey did: to complete their schooling or to drop out. Compare average adult earnings of drop-outs and high school graduates (trade school graduates and college graduates). In what other ways are their lives likely to differ?

Sports:

Where was the game of football invented? What were the circumstances? What countries play it now? Do they use the same rules? (Encyclopaedias and sports editors are good sources.)

Most famous football players in the first half of this century were *offensive* players. Rosey Grier was famous though he was "only" a lineman, and never carried the ball. Talk to a coach or adult sports fan and find out why defensive players are sometimes famous and highly paid now. What has changed? Report back to the class.

### **Reading Material**

Gibson, Bob, *From Ghetto To Glory*, Prentice-Hall, 1968. *Reading level: 7th grade*; Bob Gibson's own story of his rise from an Omaha, Nebraska ghetto to fame as a pitcher with the St. Louis Cardinals.

Jackson, Jesse, *Charley Starts From Scratch*, Harper & Row, 1968. *Reading level: 5th grade*. Novel about a high school graduate with an eye on the Olympics.

Parks, Gordon, *The Learning Tree*, Harper & Row, 1963. *Reading level: 8th grade*. Fictional account of a black youth seeking his identity.

Platt, Kin, *The Boy Who Could Make Himself Disappear*, Chilton, 1968. *Reading level: 7th grade*. Novel about a seventh grade boy, handicapped by a speech impediment and by divorcing parents, who slips into schizophrenia.

Stuart, Jesse, *The Thread That Runs So True*, Charles Scribners Sons, 1958. *Reading level: 11th grade*. Autobiographical account of the author's school experiences in the Kentucky mountains.