

AWARD SHOWS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Who chooses which movies/TV shows/albums are nominated for awards like the Oscars, the Emmys, the Grammys, and so on? A lot of award shows have a long, complicated nomination process and/or only let members of an exclusive group vote on nominees and winners. And many studios actively campaign to get their titles included, spending lots of money on ads in trade publications. Does that make it more likely that smaller independent media will be excluded? What long-term effects could that process have?

2. How are the awards really given out? Who gets to vote? Many shows imply that their awards are decided solely by the people (the Teen Choice Awards, the People's Choice Awards, the Kids' Choice Awards, etc.), but sometimes other people -- or market research firms -- are involved in the nomination process. Is that fair?

3. Who gets to present the awards? Why do you think certain celebrities are chosen? Why are actors and musicians with a new movie/TV show/album coming out more likely to be picked?

4. What motivates celebrities to present at award shows? Did you know that most shows give presenters gift baskets with thousands of dollars worth of free gifts? Why are companies interested in giving free products to celebrities (who can afford to buy them if they want to)?

5. In what other ways are award shows commercialized? Some shows have categories that are sponsored by specific products or companies (for the 2006 Teen Choice Awards, the ballot itself is brought to you by Verizon) -- how do you feel about these "branded" awards? Do

you take a specific award (or the whole show) less seriously based on who's sponsoring it?

6. Why is fashion such a big deal at award shows? Did you know that the stars usually get free clothes and jewelry to wear on the red carpet? Why would a designer or jeweler want to lend out their products?

7. Why are women under so much more scrutiny than men when it comes to award show fashion? Does seeing a non-stop parade of perfectly coiffed, beautifully dressed stars affect viewers' own body image? Why is it so much fun to mock celebs who show up in fashion "don'ts"? What does it mean that the misses get as much attention as the hits?

8. Are there too many award shows? How are the multitude of shows similar, and how are they different from each other? Do we need specialty shows like the Latin Grammys and the BET Awards to encourage diversity? Have more casual shows like the MTV Movie Awards and MTV Music Awards changed the formula at all?

9. Why do we care about award shows in the first place? Why do we spend hours watching the red carpet arrivals, the show itself, and the after parties? What does this say about our culture's obsession with glamour, celebrity, and wealth? Why do you tune in?

10. If you were going to create your own award show, what would you do? How would it be different? What media would you celebrate? What categories would you have? Who would you pick to host the show? To give out the awards? Who would decide who wins?