

Intellectual Disability: I Am Sam; The Other Sister (Movies) Est. Time: 4 Hours Viewing/45 Minutes Class

Objective

Analyze portrayals of individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) in the media.

Synopses

I Am Sam

Sam, a man with ID, has a daughter named Lucy. The girl's mother, a homeless woman, deserted both Sam and Lucy soon after the child's birth. With help from a neighbor and friends, Sam is able to care for his daughter. However, as Lucy becomes older, Sam's limitations become apparent to her. Once the staff of Child Services becomes alerted to the situation, they want to place Lucy in foster care. Sam is forced to hire a lawyer in an attempt to retain custody of his child.

The Other Sister

An overprotective mother shelters Carla, a young woman with an intellectual disability. Carla wants to become more independent, so she moves into her own apartment and enrolls in a local vocational college. At school she meets Danny, who also has ID. As they fall in love, Carla's mother becomes nervous and objects to the relationship, but Carla proves that she and Danny can handle life on their own.

Activity

View the following movies and be prepared to discuss the questions below in class.

Title: *I Am Sam* (2002)

Title: *The Other Sister* (1999)

Studio: New Line

Studio: Touchstone

For Your Information

Individuals with an intellectual disability (ID) often exhibit impairments in cognitive functioning, memory, decision-making skills, adaptive behavior, independent living skills, interpersonal skills, and communication. To learn more about intellectual disabilities, visit:

- [Intellectual Disability](#) (Center for Parent Information and Resources)
- [Intellectual Disability](#) (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association)

Intellectual Disability: I Am Sam; The Other Sister (Movies)

Questions/Discussion Topics

1. Both films portray an individual with an intellectual disability.
 - a. Critique the accuracy of the portrayals in both films.
 - b. Discuss the similarities and differences among the characters with ID in both movies.
 - c. Discuss whether you think these portrayals are accurate. Give examples to support your thoughts.
2. Both films depict familial and social relationships of individuals with ID. Are these portrayals accurate? Explain.
3. Both films allude to institutional settings where the main characters spend time. Briefly discuss Sam and Carla's attitudes about such facilities.