

BECOMING WARREN BUFFETT

EDUCATIONAL DISCUSSION GUIDE



“I have a simple message to the teachers who will be using this documentary in class. I’ve found that doing what you love makes life wonderful. I hope my story can help you instill this lesson, along with a few others I’ve learned over the years, in the minds of your students.”

— Warren Buffett



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ABOUT WARREN BUFFETT

With a net worth of more than \$60 billion, Warren Buffett is truly a one-of-a-kind billionaire. Now in his late 80's, the legendary investor still lives in a modest home in Omaha, and continues to drive himself to the office every morning to manage Berkshire Hathaway, the fourth-largest public company in the world. But more surprising than his humble lifestyle and self-effacing personality are Buffett's moral integrity and unique mind, which drove him not only to become the most successful businessman in the world, but also an unparalleled philanthropist.

With unprecedented access to his day-to-day personal life, *Becoming Warren Buffett* tells the improbable story of how an ambitious, numbers-obsessed boy from Nebraska became one of the richest, most-respected men in the world. The definitive documentary on Buffett, this candid portrait sheds new light on a man who has helped shape the way Americans view capitalism and, more recently, philanthropy. Told primarily in Buffett's own words, the film features never-before-released home videos, family photographs, archival footage and interviews with family and friends.

This guide was created for secondary, university, and adult learners, intending to inspire new perspectives on business, leadership, and social responsibility in the spirit of Warren Buffett.

Educational discussion guide by



Big Picture Educational Consulting is a leader in the field of film education and media literacy. We leverage film as a powerful educational tool to enlighten audiences, spark engagement, inspire social change, and cultivate new generations of filmgoers and filmmakers. As former classroom teachers, non-profit administrators, and film programmers, our leadership shares over 40 years of experience to help our clients utilize their films to teach and edify complex issues inside and beyond the classroom in both savvy and substantive ways.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE VIEWING THE FILM

The following questions will set the tone for a thoughtful viewing of the film *Becoming Warren Buffett*. Pick and choose which questions best suit your audience to facilitate a large-group discussion, pre-viewing journaling, or for small-group dialogue.

- Who is a person who has inspired you to be the best version of yourself? How did this person inspire you – by example? Tough love? Or another way?
- Think of a time when you suffered a great disappointment. Was there a “silver lining” to this experience? A benefit that you wouldn’t have had, if you hadn’t been disappointed? Explain.
- Who was one of the greatest teachers you’ve had in your life? What did this person teach you?
- Can you think of a time or experience in your life that you’d consider a “turning point?” What was this experience, and why was it so important to your life so far?
- There is a saying, “the chains of habit are too light to notice until they’re too heavy to break.” What does this quote mean, and what does it mean to you?
- What is your biggest fear? How does this fear limit your potential for success?
- Who is your community, and what does “community” mean to you?
- What does money mean to you? What does financial success mean to you?
- In your opinion, what is the relationship between wealth and ethics?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AFTER VIEWING THE FILM

After the film concludes, use some or all of the following questions to guide a thoughtful debrief. Depending on the setting and size of your group, you can use these questions to facilitate a whole-group dialogue, conversation in smaller break-out groups, as a supplement to assigned reading, or for homework or extended learning.

- What makes Warren Buffett “not your usual billionaire?”
- What is compounding? How does Buffett apply the concept of compounding to his business dealings? How does he apply this same concept to his relationships and philanthropic endeavors? Explain compounding as a mathematical concept – and then consider how it can be interpreted as a philosophical idea and applied to life in general.
- What impact did school, and individual teachers – both formal and informal – have on Warren Buffett's personal and professional development?
- What is the importance of community to Warren Buffett? How does this relate to his business philosophy, his attitude about family, and his approach to philanthropy? How has it affected his success?
- What is the “circle of competence?” How has Buffett used this in his business dealings? How can you apply this to your own life?
- In the film, Buffett quotes a speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which is actually quoting the writer James Russell Lowell: “Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne, Yet that scaffold sways the future.” How do you interpret the meaning of this phrase? What did it mean to MLK, Jr.? What does it mean to Buffett?
- What are Warren Buffett’s attitudes about civil rights? About women’s rights? How did he come to these attitudes?
- How does Warren Buffett spend his time on a daily basis? How do these habits affect his life as a businessman? As a father? As a humanitarian?

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AFTER VIEWING THE FILM (cont.)

- How would you describe Warren Buffett's reputation? How does this reputation help him succeed in business?
- What happened shortly after Buffett acquired a large share of Solomon Brothers? How did he personally manage this crisis?
- Discuss this quote within the context of Warren Buffett's biography:

“It's a very strange thing, love, you can't get rid of it. Give it out you get more back. Try to hang on to it, and you lose it.”
- Do you think Warren Buffett will be remembered first as a businessman or as a humanitarian? Explain.
- Choose one of the following quotes and discuss how the statement relates to Buffett's financial success:
 - A. “Those who have the least in this world should benefit from those who have the most.”
 - B. “Don't sleep through life. Look for the job that you'd take if you didn't need a job. Do what you love.”
 - C. “I have been asked immeasurable times what I would like inscribed on my tombstone. I always answer with a single word: ‘teacher.’”

GET INVOLVED

You don't need to be a billionaire to make a difference. **The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**, the Foundation to which Buffett has pledged the majority of his fortune, supports partnering organizations on the ground around the world to take on some tough challenges: extreme poverty and poor health in developing countries, and the failures of America's education system. They focus on these issues in particular because they are the biggest barriers that prevent people from making the most of their lives. Find an issue, locate their partnering organizations across the globe, and find out how to get involved with the Gates Foundation and the issues they address at:

www.gatesfoundation.org/What-We-Do

Or, check out a few of the partners they work with and how you can support them directly, below:



Gates Foundation partner Educators for Excellence is a growing movement of 25,000 educators, united around a common set of values and principles for improving student learning and elevating the teaching profession. Find out how to support E4E at: www.e4e.org/take-action



Gates Foundation Partner Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In the United States and around the world, they give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm — transforming their lives and the future we share. Get involved here: www.savethechildren.org



Gates Foundation partner Heifer International links communities and helps bring sustainable agriculture and commerce to areas with a long history of poverty. Their animals provide partners with both food and reliable income. Learn more and support their work at: www.heifer.org/what-you-can-do



Gates Foundation partner Nothing But Nets is a global grassroots campaign to raise awareness, funds, and voices to fight malaria. Get involved here: www.nothingbutnets.net