

New Biology Film Helps Girls

The film is an ideal medium for teaching "hard-to-handle" areas in human biology.

BIOLOGY has long been taught in schools, often under some such euphemistic heading as "healthy living," "hygiene," or "physiology." Human biology was covered to a given point in such courses. But available teaching tools and materials were inadequate to permit teachers to proceed further. Thus, it was difficult to keep such instruction impersonal—difficult, even, to make it clear.

One subject in the hard-to-handle classification has been menstruation. Teachers of adolescent girls know well the problems resulting from lack of information, misinformation, and a wrong mental attitude toward this normal bodily function.



This cheerful girl typifies the film.

Many mothers give their daughters no information, either because they feel unable to explain the function or because they shrink from frank discussion. Others merely pass on inherited superstitions or set up limitations on activity during the menstrual period, which activities medical science has proved are unnecessary or even harmful. These misconceptions often become responsible for serious psychoses in the adult woman.

A Film Can Teach a Difficult Subject

Teachers have persisted in their efforts to wipe out the evil influence of ignorance on the subject of menstruation. They have welcomed every teaching tool that has been made available to help them.

Today, the motion picture is proving the ideal medium to impart sound information and to develop a wholesome mental attitude toward this function. The film, as a medium, has outstanding advantages. It is impersonal. It is run in a darkened room which prevents embarrassment on the part of the students. Furthermore, a trained commentator speaks from the screen without self-consciousness. Thus, no factor is present which might



She radiates health as she takes her daily shower.

cause students to feel that this is a subject which should not be discussed openly.

All of these advantages have been incorporated in a carefully prepared film, entitled *The Story of Menstruation*, produced by

Walt Disney Productions for the International Cellulose Cotton Products Company. The film is for teen-age girls and will reach them through classes in high schools, junior colleges and 4-H Clubs.

This film has been built around the reasoning that substituting accurate knowledge for fear and mystery will help to create a healthy attitude toward menstruation. It should help to banish girl-to-girl superstitions and misconceptions. It should serve to minimize the mental handicap which hampers many girls during their periods.



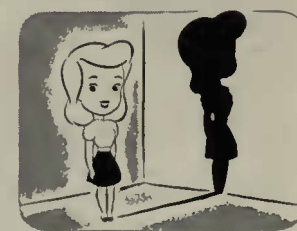
"Don't be droopy," she warns.

A Pleasant, Direct and Scientific Approach

The initial plan of the sponsor called for a frank, pleasant directness that has proved to be the essence of wholesome good taste. The tone was to be straight-forward, matter-of-fact, and casual. Any apparent "delicacy" would be an obvious signal that there is something to be delicate about. The whole approach was keyed by the frank title, *The Story of Menstruation*. No coy or sugar-coated, no fluttery or clever title was employed, because it might suggest that the producers didn't dare call things by their right names. There is no suggestion of a "bees and flowers" approach. But don't think that the film is stuffy. It isn't. It couldn't be with the Disney colorful and striking animations.

Two years were spent in making this film, during which time thousands of drawings were created and hundreds discarded. Subject matter, in story-board form, was checked repeatedly in various parts of the country by teachers, girls at various age levels, and medical authorities. The constant effort to refine and to revise resulted in a high standard for the picture. The investment in this one-reel film runs to a sum which few producers of educational pictures could afford to spend.

No mention of the sponsor's product appears anywhere, only the name of Kotex on the title cards at the beginning and end, putting responsibility for subject matter directly upon the sponsor.



She says that good posture is important.

Difficult Production Problems

The making of this film posed many difficult problems. Animation was, of course, a happy solution

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She gives helpful hints on appearance.

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If only the motion picture industry would heed the long-range recommendations of the Commission, it could achieve greatness on a world basis to compare with the fame, the notoriety, and the technical skill that it already has. But then, on whose side are you?

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Recommendations by Llewellyn White in *The American Radio* include:

1. The FCC should make the separation of programming and advertising compulsory; program standards should be considered when licensing stations;
2. Broadcasters must cut themselves free from the "strangle hold" of advertisers;
3. Broadcasting should come within the meaning of "press" as protected by the Constitution's first amendment;
4. The FCC should license more self-supporting, non-commercial stations run by educational institutions and state and local governments;
5. An independent agency should be established to inquire into radio practices, to appraise government actions effecting communication, and the like.

TRENDS

- **Going to School with the Movies**—Hubert A. Kenny—*American Mercury*, 64:36, January, 1947. (Reprints available.)

A popular appeal for the greater use of films in education, emphasizing the fact that only one-fifth of our public schools have sound projectors. "Here is a means of making them (students) think, and they love it," the author writes as he sets out to prove by citing experimental studies that children gained more knowledge and retained it over a longer period of time with the aid of educational films. Should serve a useful purpose as documentation for local school boards.

TEACHER TRAINING

- **Developing Standards of Teacher Competency in Audio-Visual Education**—A Committee Report for the American Council on Education—*California Schools*, 18:3, January, 1947.

A footnote explains that this report is to be incorporated in a report by the Committee on Content in Audio-Visual Education of the American Council on Education. The 26 educators from colleges, universities, and school systems of California were asked to find out what teacher-education institutions should do in order to comply with the state regulation in California (effective July, 1947) that they give a course in audio-visual education to all prospective teachers.

The outline of criteria for evaluation should be helpful where teacher-training institutions want a guide for their own program. This report supplements the details given in the Western Illinois Teachers College survey described above.

FILM GUIDES

- **Look and Talk**—National Institute of Social Relations, Inc., 1029 17th St., N.W., Washington 6, D. C. 5c ea.

Three guides have been published to date, viz. *Man in the Cage*, *It's Your America*, and *Brotherhood of Man*. They contain significant information on each topic, leading questions for discussion, and a reading list.

Talk It Over, from the same source, is a clever, attractive and stimulating pamphlet reviewing America's race problem, under the sub-title, *Red, White, Blue—and Black*. There are suggestions for visual aids and sources of information, together with a summary of pertinent facts.

PHOTOGRAPHY

- **So You Want to Make Lantern Slides**—B. A. Aughinbaugh—*Film and Radio Guide*, 13:10, December, 1946.

Describes simply and clearly how photographic slides are made.

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to most of these. With this medium of expression, "glass-figure" technique could be employed to show the internal organs. A half-real and half-diagrammatic rendering of these was developed in order to avoid any unpleasantness. Thus, the technical clarity of straight diagrams was maintained, and the ghastly effect of a realistic rendering was avoided. No nude figures were shown. Medical language was simplified, and unnecessary terms eliminated without a loss of essential accuracy. A gynecologist of the highest reputation checked the story in detail at every stage of its development: words, pictorial representations, animations, and implications. For example, the bridegroom was removed from the marriage scene which occurs near the end of the film. The succeeding shot shows a young mother with her baby, suggesting the natural course of life. This idea of a natural and normal cycle of life is constantly stressed in the film. In her final words, the commentator states, "There is nothing strange or mysterious about menstruation. All life is built on cycles. And the menstrual cycle is one normal and natural part of Nature's eternal plan for passing on the gift of life."

Woman Narrator

While most films are narrated by men, a woman was chosen for this one. "This narration presents a peculiar problem," reads the neat bit of understatement in one of the dialogue director's reports. "To project, unobtrusively, our theme that menstruation is a natural and normal routine and nothing to get excited about, our voice must project the acme of matter-of-fact sincerity. . . . The voice must not call attention to itself by being too good, or too bad; too glib, or too amateurish."

Teachers who have used the film are deeply impressed by the reaction of girls. They enter into discussion readily and ask questions with sincere, simple frankness. Some schools have arranged to have the films reviewed by P.T.A. groups before it is shown to students. Parents reflect eagerness to have the picture shown to their daughters.

One surprising development from teachers' meetings was the recommendation that the film be shown to boys. It was argued that girls would be saved a lot of embarrassment if boys were given this healthy accurate information. Many groups of boys have now seen the film. Teachers comment upon their courteous, attentive interest. Boys frequently express gratitude for the opportunity to see the film. Some even express the opinion that all boys should see it.

Distribution

Bookings for *The Story of Menstruation* will be handled by the International Cellucotton Products Co., 919 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago 11, Illinois. It is 16mm. 10 minutes long, sound, and in color. Use of the film opens the way for a frank discussion of problems after the showing.