

e-Edition Plus

A current events feature for teaching with electronic editions.

By Sara Shahriari

What makes a blockbuster for those summer movies?

Summer is a time for school vacations, swimming pools and spending time with friends. It's also the time of year when movie studios release some of their biggest films aimed at young people.

This summer "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2," "Transformers 3: Dark of the Moon" and "Captain America: The First Avenger" will be in theaters.

So will "Pirates of the Caribbean 4," "Cars 2," a new "Winnie the Pooh" and "Judy Moody and the NOT Bummer Summer."

So why do movie studios choose the months of June, July and August to premiere these films? The main reason is that school vacations mean students and their families have more free time.

Movies are a big business in the United States and around the world. Every year thousands of movies are made in the United States, but only about 650 of those ever make it to movie theaters. Of those 650, fewer than 100 make money and are profitable, according to an article published in the newspaper USA Today.

Movie studios, which provide a lot of the money that goes into making movies, want to make movies that earn much more money than the amount invested in making them.

For example, the movie "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1," cost \$125 million to make, yet earned \$954 million in theaters over the next few months. That means the movie earned more than \$800 million just from movie ticket sales.

To put that number into perspective, with \$800 million you could buy about

16,000 luxury cars at \$50,000 each.

Even more money

Though ticket sales are important, they are only part of how much a movie earns.

After the movie leaves theaters, it continues to earn money for the people who made it through DVD sales and deals to show the movie on television.

Some movies make even lots of money from video games, action figures and other toys.

Blockbuster math

When a movie earns much more money than it costs to make, like

"Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1," it is called a blockbuster.

The biggest blockbuster ever made was "Avatar," which earned more than \$2.5 BILLION in theaters, after it came out in the summer of 2009. No other movie has ever earned as much as "Avatar" did in movie theaters.

Things don't always go well for expensive movies, however.

For example, the 2008 movie "Speedracer" cost \$200 million to make, and earned less than \$100 million in movie theaters.

But with about 48 million people between the ages of 12 and 24 going to the movies each year, moviemakers will continue paying special attention to this age group.

Young people spend a lot of money, and you can be sure that movie studios will be trying to get as many of you as possible into theaters this summer.

Paramount Pictures



"Transformers 3: Dark of the Moon," which features lots of action and special effects, is expected to be one of the more popular movies in the summer of 2011.

Talk About the News

- **Movies, television and music are often referred to as “popular culture.”** What is popular often tells a lot about what people are like, and what our society or nation is like. As a class talk about what movies, TV shows and music are your favorites. Then talk about the summer movies you most look forward to seeing this year. What would you tell a visitor from another country about what your choices say about you?

Learning Standards: Engaging peers in constructive conversations about topics of interest or importance; responding to a variety of visual, written, oral and electronic texts by making connections to students' personal lives and the lives of others.

Explore Your e-Edition



- **Sometimes ideas for movies come from other works of art.** The “Harry Potter” movies, for example, were inspired by J.K. Rowling’s books. Other movies have been inspired by comic books, TV, children’s books, teen books and even a theme park. With a friend, think of a book, song, rap, painting or TV show that might give you a story idea for a movie. Write a sentence explaining your choice. Then pick stars from the movie ads in the e-Edition to be in your movie.

Learning Standards: Acquiring information from written, visual and electronic sources; engaging peers in constructive conversations about topics of interest or importance; writing fluently for multiple purposes.

- **Look through the e-Edition and find a movie review. Or find one online. Using the review as a model, write your own review of a movie that you have seen recently. What did you like and dislike about the movie, and would you recommend that your classmates go to see it? Share your review with the class.**

Learning Standards: Developing critical standards for personal use; writing fluently for multiple purposes to produce compositions, such as stories, poetry, personal narratives, editorials, research reports, critical reviews or persuasive essays

- **Find the section of the e-Edition where movies are advertised. Make a list of five movies you see advertised that you think will be blockbusters, and a list of five movies you think will not make very much money in movie theaters. Share your lists with the class and explain your choices.**

Learning Standards: Developing critical standards for personal use; responding to a variety of visual, written, oral and electronic texts by making connections to students' personal lives and the lives of others.

How Well Did You Read?

Understanding what you read is a skill that will help you all your life. Review the story about summer movies by answering the questions below.

1. **Roughly how many movies that become profitable are made in the United States each year?**
 - A. 100
 - B. 10,000
 - C. 100,000
 - D. 1,000,000
2. **According to the story, why are so many movies aimed at young people released during the summer?**
 - A. Because young people like to see movies more in the summer
 - B. Because young people have more free time in the summer
 - C. Because young people like movies more than older people
 - D. Because people over 50 have stopped going to movies
3. **What makes a movie a blockbuster?**
 - A. When it earns less than it cost to make
 - B. When it earns the same as it cost to make
 - C. When it earns much more than it cost to make
 - D. When it is based on a book
4. **What movie has earned more than any other in theaters?**
 - A. “Pirates of the Caribbean I”
 - B. “Toy Store”
 - C. “Avatar”
 - D. “Transformers 3”
5. **Roughly how many people between the ages of 12 and 24 go to the movies each year?**
 - A. 125 million
 - B. 78 million
 - C. 48 million
 - D. 2.5 billion