

Question 1

In chapter 9 of "Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture," Romanowski examines the role of melodrama in popular culture and its relationship to the Christian faith. Melodrama is characterized by exaggerated emotions, simplified moral conflicts, and a tendency toward sentimentality. Romanowski argues that while melodrama can be a powerful emotional experience, it ultimately runs against the grain of the main tenets of the Christian faith. Melodrama simplifies moral conflicts into a battle between good and evil and offers simplistic solutions to complex problems. This approach ignores the reality of human sinfulness and the complexity of moral decision-making. Often, melodramas focus on individual salvation rather than a larger vision of redemption and renewal. It offers a vision of a world that can be transformed by the actions of a single heroic figure, rather than a community working together towards a common goal.

Question 2

Romanowski discusses classical Hollywood film and its relationship to the Christian cultural landscape. The classical Hollywood film is characterized by a number of features, including a linear narrative structure, a focus on character development, and a clear resolution of conflicts. These features can work against portrayals of a Christian cultural landscape in a number of ways. For example, the linear narrative structure of classical Hollywood films tends to emphasize individualism and personal achievement over communal values and social responsibility. This can be at odds with Christian values, which prioritize the well-being of the community over

individual success. Another example is the focus on character development in classical Hollywood films can lead to a de-emphasis on larger social and political issues. This can work against Christian values, which emphasize the importance of social justice and the well-being of the marginalized.

Lastly, the clear resolution of conflicts in classical Hollywood films can work against Christian values by oversimplifying complex issues and offering simplistic solutions to complex problems. This can lead to an underemphasis on the importance of struggle and the need for ongoing efforts toward social and political change.

Question 3

In Chapter 9, we discuss the cultural emphasis on health, wealth, and success and its relationship to the Christian faith. He notes that many people believe that they deserve to be healthy, wealthy, and successful because of their own goodness, hard work, and perseverance.

This idea can be traced back to the Protestant work ethic and the belief that material success is a sign of God's favor. However, Romanowski states that this belief can be problematic for Christians, as it can lead to a narrow focus on personal achievement and success and a lack of concern for the well-being of others.

The cultural emphasis on health, wealth, and success can be seen in popular media, which often promotes the idea that anyone can achieve success if they work hard enough and have the right attitude. However, he notes that this idea is often oversimplified and ignores the complex social

and economic factors that can impact a person's success. Christians should recognize that material success is not a sign of God's favor, but rather a product of social and economic structures that are often unjust and oppressive.

Question 4

The cultural landscape of Hollywood films exaggerates individualism, often favoring individual solutions to problems and conflicts rather than corporate or institutional solutions. According to Romanowski, this individualistic perspective can be problematic because it can distort our understanding of similar events in the real world. For example, the emphasis on individual solutions can lead to a belief that social and economic problems can be solved by individual effort alone, rather than through collective action and institutional change. This can obscure the systemic nature of many social problems and overlook the need for structural change to address them.

Also, the emphasis on individualism in Hollywood films can promote a view of the world in which individuals are solely responsible for their success or failure. This can lead to a lack of concern for the well-being of others and an unwillingness to recognize the ways in which other factors such as race, class, and gender impact individual outcomes.

Question 5

1. The Godfather (1972) - This film embodies many of the characteristics of classical Hollywood filmmaking, including a strong emphasis on narrative structure, clear moral stakes, and the triumph of the individual. However, it also deals with themes of family, loyalty, and the corrupting influence of power.

2. Rocky (1976) - This film is a classic example of the Hollywood formula, with a focus on a sympathetic individual struggling against the odds to achieve his dreams. At the same time, the film also deals with themes of perseverance, humility, and the importance of community.

3. Titanic (1997) - This film uses melodramatic techniques to tell a romantic story set against the backdrop of the doomed ocean liner. While the film may be criticized for its excessive sentimentality, it also deals with themes of love, sacrifice, and the importance of valuing people over material possessions.

4. The Pursuit of Happyness (2006) - This film embodies many of the characteristics of the classical Hollywood formula, with a focus on an individual overcoming obstacles to achieve success. However, it also deals with themes of family, perseverance, and the importance of community support.

5. Wall Street (1987) - This film focuses on the materialistic values of the corporate world, with a protagonist who is driven by greed and ambition. While the film may be seen as a critique of the excesses of capitalism, it also reinforces the idea that success is defined by material wealth and individual achievement.

Question 6

The author writes that the classical Hollywood formula often portrays wealth and material possessions as signs of success and happiness and that the characters who lack these things are often depicted as failures or unhappy. This runs counter to the Christian understanding of wealth and poverty, which emphasizes the importance of contentment, stewardship, and care for the less fortunate. Poverty is more complex in the Bible since they consider social causes such as injustice. The wealthy can be greedy selfish people who take from others to make them poor.

We Christians should remember the ways in which Hollywood portrays materialism and should seek to live out a counter-cultural vision of wealth and poverty that emphasizes generosity, justice, and compassion. This means rejecting the idea that material possessions are the key to happiness and fulfillment, and instead seeking to live a life of simplicity and service to others. Ultimately, the Christian vision of wealth and poverty can offer a powerful alternative to the materialistic values of Hollywood and can help us to find true meaning and purpose in life.

Question 7

The author argues that Christians should be aware of the assumptions about materialism that are prevalent in Hollywood films. He suggests that Christians should recognize the dangers of materialism and the importance of spiritual values. We should also be aware that materialism can

lead to a distortion of relationships and a lack of concern for others, especially those in poverty.

Ultimately, Christians should strive to find a balance between material possessions and spiritual values and to use their wealth and resources in ways that honor God and benefit others.