

**Youth Culture Lesson**  
**Finding Teachable Moments in Culture**  
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**Dark Night:** Aurora Shooting Shocks, Scares Nation  
By Paul Asay

**What Happened:**

A heavily armed man wearing a bulletproof vest opened fire on a movie theater in Aurora, Colo., during an early-morning screening of *The Dark Knight Rises* July 20. The massacre left 12 dead and 58 wounded—many of them teens and young adults.

The suspect—24-year-old James Holmes—was apprehended within minutes of the attack. Some reports suggest he had dyed his hair red and had taken to calling himself “The Joker,” the name of Batman’s most notorious nemesis.

Police soon discovered Holmes had booby-trapped his apartment, filling it with trip wires connected to about 30 homemade grenades.

The tragedy shocked much of America. The attack resembled something out of a Batman movie, what with its meticulously planned desire to sow fear and distrust. Many people who had hoped to see *The Dark Knight Rises* this weekend decided to stay home, afraid of copycats. Others were scared to go anywhere people gather in large numbers.

Considering the fact that most of us use movies as sanctuaries of sorts—places to get away from it all—the reaction wasn’t too surprising. Some pundits implored to take a page from Batman’s book and stand up to the chaos.

“Don’t be afraid,” wrote *Entertainment Weekly*’s Anthony Breznican. “This isn’t even about him. It’s about us standing up and saying we’re not going to allow the fear created by some random...boogeyman to resonate any further. He was a coward, stomping around in body-armor as he blinded people and shot them in the back as they crawled away. Don’t let him feel bigger than he is, and don’t let him take any more away from us.”

**Talk About It:**

Did you see a midnight showing of *The Dark Knight Rises*? Other midnight screenings? Did what happened in Aurora make you think twice about going to the movies?

In Christopher Nolan’s Dark Knight movies, Gotham City is a place filled with fear and frightening people. Have you seen Nolan’s Batman films? What are people scared of in them? Is their fear justified? Do you think the film’s heroes—Batman, Commissioner Gordon and others—get scared? If so, how do they deal with fear?

Is fear always a bad thing? Can you think of instances when being scared might be a positive?

What scares you? Do you worry about things such as what happened in Aurora? What about more esoteric fears, such as the economy or global warming? How do you handle fear? Have you ever been ashamed of how you dealt with something you were scared of? Have you ever been proud of how you reacted?

**What the Bible Says:**

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isa. 41:10).

“What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).

“The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1).

“The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous” (Ps. 19:9).