

## Student Handout 5-Rocky Balboa

The film Rocky, written by a then-struggling Sylvester Stallone, tells the story of the rise of a Philadelphia “palooka”, a kind-hearted collector for a loan shark, to the heights of athletic accomplishment when he is given a chance to fight the reigning heavyweight champ, Apollo Creed. Besides launching Stallone’s career, spawning five sequels, and earning more than ten times its production costs, Rocky perpetuates the myth of the triumph of the underdog. The main character combines many of the characteristics that defined the comic-strip palooka, with the distinct flavor of Philadelphia.

The story of “The Italian Stallion” is about more than boxing. It is about a man who only wants to go the distance with the champ: to prove to himself, and to the woman that he loves, that he is capable of greatness. One of the enduring images from the movie is when Rocky furiously climbs the stairs of the Philadelphia Museum of Art at the end of his run. This scene has become iconic in its representation of the triumph over personal weakness. Rocky discovers, through hard work and sacrifice, that he is tougher and capable of more than even he has previously suspected.

But Rocky does not shy from the brutality that is boxing. Rocky uses a steer carcass in a meat freezer as his heavy bag, and his fifteen-round slugfest with Apollo Creed, leaves both men battered and broken. Creed wins the split-decision, but all that Rocky can think of is Adrian, the woman that he loves. In this state of physical despair, he has achieved the respect of the boxing world and the personal clarity to recognize it for what it is worth. The primal urge to fight is displaced by the intimately connected urge to love. In Rocky we find the toughness of a Loughran, the relentless attack of Joe Frazier, and the rise from adversity that Hopkins will embody—a true Philadelphia boxer.



***Sylvester Stallone and Burgess Meredith in Rocky***

***Actor Sylvester Stallone wrote the script to “Rocky” and then landed the title role. The film tells of an unknown Philadelphia boxer who, with the help of trainer (Burgess Meredith), takes a crack at the World Heavyweight Boxing championship and proves that he can “go the distance.”***

***Courtesy Corbis-Bettmann***

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