

Popular Culture and Christian Reflection

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## Introduction

The purpose of this page is to share pastoral perspectives on aspects of popular culture. Most of these reflections will be from movies. My wife and I have generally waited until movies come out on DVD. It saves on expenses. We can watch the movie when we want. The intent in what I write here is to tell part of the story in the movie. I leave conclusions, insights, and learning to you.

By the way, I like only a few TV Shows. My wife have learned that it helps to simply our lives by waiting until DVD versions come out. We usually rent them. We can watch the episodes when we want. We do not experience the bombardment of commercials that would entice us in other directions. In any case, here are the TV shows.

X-Files

24

[Monk](#)

Lost

Boston Legal

Heroes

The Sopranos

John uses the analogy of light and darkness in a variety of ways. Here is one way:

John 1:4-5

in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

It ought not to surprise us if the people who shape popular culture at times capture a piece of that light and express it in their work. In fact, at times, even the church must admit that it does not see the light in certain areas as well as do those outside the church. For that reason, we need open minds and hearts to hear the truth, even when it comes in a movie or television show. To suggest this is to say that even modern popular culture can become a text for theological reflection. I hope that this offering will offer one way to approach a major medium of popular culture.

I warn

## Feast of Love – 2007 Movie

*Feast of Love* is a 2007 movie. It runs 102 minutes. It received an R rating, for its nudity. It made only \$3.5 million in the USA. Allison Burnett adapted the screenplay from the novel by Charles Baxter. Robert Benton is the director.

It is a romantic drama with some comic elements but a great deal of in-your-face depressing reality, too. The movie stars Radha Mitchell (*High Art*, *Silent Hill*) as Diana, a Real Estate Sales Rep who has a relationship with Bradley (Greg Kinnear). The film also features Morgan Freeman as Harry, an older academic who provides Bradley, a coffee house owner, with a lot of advice, and Selma Blair as Kathryn, Bradley's first wife.

The film begins in Portland with Kathryn having a lesbian affair with Jenny (Stana Katic). Bradley gets divorced, and then hooks up with Diana, who is having an affair with a married man named David (Billy Burke).

There is also a subplot involving a couple of bohemian coffeehouse workers named Chole (Alexa Davalos), and Oscar (Toby Hemingway). Chole finds out Oscar is going to die from a fortune teller, and decides to marry him anyway.

David, and Diana have some torrid sex scenes in a motel, but Diana breaks it off for Bradley. Bradley, and Diana get married, and the David reenters their lives, and Diana has another affair with David. Diana breaks off her marriage to Bradley, for David, and drives Bradley into a depressing despair.

Bradley becomes self destructive, and finally ends up with Margaret (Erika Marozsan).

Oscar dies while playing football. Harry and Bradley have a conversation on a park bench, after the funeral of Oscar.

Bradley: I was awful, wasn't it?

Harry: It was unspeakable. God is either dead or despises us.

Bradley: You don't really believe that.

Harry: Maybe. I saw the most remarkable thing just now. I saw a couple making love on the football field. I was envious. Then, I felt sorry for them. There is so much they do not know. Heartbreak they can't even imagine.

Bradley: Well, even if they knew, it wouldn't change anything. Well, Chloe knew what was going to happen to Oscar. Some psychic lady told her that Oscar was going to die. She didn't run away. She didn't crawl into a hole. She found them a house. She threw away her birth control. And she married him. God doesn't hate us, Harry. If he did, he wouldn't have made our hearts so brave.

Later, Harry will defend Chloe from the father of Oscar. Harry then invites Chloe and her unborn child to come live with them. She accepts.

## Atonement – 2007 Movie

Atonement

*Atonement* is a 2007 movie. It received an R rating. Running time is 123 minutes. It received many award nominations, including from the Academy. Focus Films presents a film directed by Joe Wright and written by Christopher Hampton, based on the novel by Ian McEwan. It made \$50.7 million in the USA.

"Atonement" begins on joyous gossamer wings, and descends into an abyss of tragedy and loss. Its opening scenes in an English country house between the wars are like a dream of elegance, and then a 13-year-old girl sees something she misunderstands, tells a lie and destroys all possibility of happiness in three lives, including her own.

The movie's opening act is like a breathless celebration of pure heedless joy, a demonstration of the theory that the pinnacle of human happiness was reached by life in an English country house between the wars. Of course that was more true of those upstairs than downstairs. We meet Cecilia Tallis (Keira Knightley), the bold, older daughter of an old family, and Robbie Turner (James McAvoy), their housekeeper's promising son, who is an Oxford graduate, thanks to the generosity of Cecilia's father. Despite their difference in social class, they are powerfully attracted to each other, and that leads to a charged erotic episode next to a fountain on the house lawn.

This meeting is seen from an upstairs window by Cecilia's younger sister Briony (Saoirse Ronan), who thinks she sees Robbie mistreating her sister in his idea of rude sex play. We see the same scene later from Robbie and Cecilia's point of view, and realize it involves their first expression of mutual love. But Briony does not understand, has a crush on Robbie herself, and as she reads an intercepted letter and interrupts a private tryst, her resentment grows until she tells the lie that will send Robbie out of Cecilia's reach.

Robbie has enlisted and been posted to France. Cecilia is a nurse in London, and so is Briony, now 18, trying to atone for what she realizes was a tragic error. There is a meeting of the three, only one, in London, that demonstrates to them what they have all lost.

The film cuts back and forth between the war in France and the bombing of London, and there is a single (apparently) unbroken shot of the beach at Dunkirk that is one of the great takes in film history, achieved or augmented with CGI though it is. (If it looks real, in movie logic, it is real.) After an agonizing trek from behind enemy lines, Robbie is among the troops waiting to be evacuated, in a Dunkirk much more of a bloody mess than legend would have us believe. In the months before, the lovers have written, promising each other the happiness they have earned.

Here is a more complete analysis of the plot I read at IMD. It also contained the following quotable material.

In England in 1935, precocious 13-year-old Briony Tallis (Saoirse Ronan) lives on her family's country estate with her mother and sister, Cecilia (Keira Knightley). Cecilia is home for the summer from Cambridge where she had been studying with the housekeeper's son, Robbie (James McAvoy). She and Robbie have an uncertain relationship; neither is willing to act on it but a certain romantic chemistry exists between them. One day, Briony sees from her bedroom window an argument between Cecilia and Robbie at the fountain. Robbie accidentally broke an antique vase and a piece of it fell into the fountain. Angrily, Cecilia stripped to her underwear and dove into the fountain to retrieve it. Briony is confused about the sexual tension between the two of them.



The Tallises are being visited by young relatives from the north -- the twins Pierrot and Jackson (Felix and Charlie von Simsin) and their 15-year-old sister, Lola (Juno Temple), whose parents are in the process of divorcing. Leon Tallis (Patrick Kennedy) brings his friend Paul (Benedict Cumberbatch) for dinner. Paul keenly follows Hitler's political advance and predicts war. He plans to sell chocolate bars to the British military to give to their soldiers. While he tries to amuse Pierrot and Jackson, Paul and Lola flirt.

Embarrassed by his behavior earlier in the day, Robbie tries to write an apology note to Cecilia. One of the drafts includes a sexually charged declaration of his love for her. He then writes a more formal apology he intends to deliver to her. However, he accidentally gives the sexual note to Briony while walking to dinner at the Tallises that night; he gives her the note because he believes it will be less embarrassing if it comes from Briony instead of him. When he realizes what he has done, he calls out to Briony but she is too far away to hear him. Back in the house, she reads the note and is scandalized. She gives the note to Cecilia but later confides to Lola that she believes Robbie is a dangerous sex maniac. Lola has come to her with arm bruises that she accuses her twin brothers of giving to her but Briony ignores them.

Robbie arrives for dinner. He and Cecilia discuss the note and admit their love for one another. They make passionate love in the library. In the middle of their love session, in which she is against the book case, they declare their love for each other. Briony discovers them. At dinner, it is discovered that Pierrot and Jackson have run away. Everyone looks for them. While looking for them by a creek, Briony stumbles on Lola being raped by someone. He runs away into the darkness. Briony insists to first Lola and then the police that Robbie was the culprit and brandishes the sexual letter to Cecilia as evidence. Only Cecilia protests his innocence. When Robbie returns with the twins, he is arrested for rape. Tried and convicted, he is sent to prison. Four years later, he is released into the British army and makes up part of the British Expeditionary Force that is sent to northern France in an attempt to halt the Nazi advance.

In northern France, Robbie and two fellow soldiers attempt to make their way to Dunkirk, where the remnants of the BEF are to be evacuated after the Nazis rout their forces and the French. He has a shrapnel wound in his chest. Several weeks earlier, before he left London, he saw Cecilia again. She remained true to him for four years and begs him to come back to her. She reveals that she has broken contact with her family over her love for Robbie and belief in his innocence. She gives him a photograph of a seaside cottage near Dover to which they can retire. It will give him strength as he struggles towards Dunkirk. Cecilia is a nurse in London. She learns that Briony, now 18 (Romola Garai) has decided not to study at Cambridge and is training to be a nurse herself. Briony knows that Robbie did not rape Lola, that it was Paul -- to whom Lola is now engaged and who has become a millionaire selling his candy to the British army. Briony goes to see Cecilia to admit her guilt and state her willingness to do whatever it takes to atone for her sins and clear Robbie's name. Robbie is in Cecilia's apartment when she gets there. Although they are angry with her, they tell her what she needs to do to make things right. She agrees, then leaves as Cecilia and Robbie are intimate for one last time before he is shipped to France with the BEF.

In 1999, we cut to present day and we see an old Briony Tallis (Vanessa Redgrave) being interviewed about her latest book, titled *Atonement*. She explains how it

is her last book because she is dying and she wanted to be completely honest about all the events of the situation. She admits however that she was not honest about one part. That she never went to her sister that day to ask for forgiveness and that Robbie was never there because he died of septicemia in France waiting to be taken to the hospital a few months earlier. She also says that she never got to set things right with her sister because she was killed in a bomb blast a few months after Robbie died. Briony admits that she has had to live with this truth all her life so she changed it in her book, in order to give Cecilia and Robbie their chance to be together in her book, if not in real life.

Robbie and Cecilia walk down the beach on a bright, beautiful day. On the steps of the seaside cottage, they look at the beautiful white cliffs, then disappear inside.

Robbie Turner: [voiceover] Dearest Cecilia, the story can resume. The one I had been planning on that evening walk. I can become again the man who once crossed the surrey park at dusk, in my best suit, swaggering on the promise of life. The man who, with the clarity of passion, made love to you in the library. The story can resume. I will return. Find you, love you, marry you and live without shame.

---

Briony - 18 years old: I am very, very sorry for the terrible distress that I have caused you. I am very, very sorry...

---

[Robbie has just broken a vase belonging to Cecilia's family]

Cecilia Tallis: You idiot... You realize that's probably the most valuable thing we own?

Robbie Turner: Not anymore it isn't.

---

Cecilia Tallis: [crying] I don't know how I could've been so ignorant about myself... so... so stupid. And you know what I'm talking about, don't you? You knew before I did.

Robbie Turner: Why're you crying?

Cecilia Tallis: Don't you know?

Robbie Turner: Yes, I know exactly.

[kisses her]

---

Robbie Turner: I'm sorry, you weren't meant to see that. It was the wrong version.

Cecilia Tallis: What was in the right one?

Robbie Turner: It was more formal... Less...

Cecilia Tallis: Anatomical?

---

Briony Tallis, aged 13: Lola, can I tell you something? Something really terrible?

Lola Quincey: Yes please.

Briony Tallis, aged 13: What's the worse word you can possibly imagine?

---

Paul Marshall: Bite it... You've got to bite it...

---

Briony Tallis, aged 13: Cee?

Cecilia Tallis: Yes?

Briony Tallis, aged 13: Why don't you talk to Robbie anymore?

Cecilia Tallis: I do. We just move in different circles, that's all.

---

Cecilia Tallis: [about Robbie] No need to encourage him.

---

Leon Tallis: Guess who we met on the way in.

Cecilia Tallis: Robbie.

Leon Tallis: Told him to join us tonight.

Cecilia Tallis: Oh, Leon, you didn't!

---

Robbie Turner: [about the letter he sent her] It was a mistake.

Cecilia Tallis: Briony read it.

Robbie Turner: I'm so sorry, it was the wrong version.

Cecilia Tallis: Yes.

Robbie Turner: It was never meant to be read.

Cecilia Tallis: No.

[walks away, Robbie follows her]

Cecilia Tallis: What was in the version I was meant to read?

Robbie Turner: Don't know... it was more formal, and less...

Cecilia Tallis: Anatomical?

Robbie Turner: Yes.

---

Leon Tallis: What do you say, Cee? Does the hot weather make you behave badly? Good heavens, you're blushing.

Cecilia Tallis: Just hot in here, that's all.

---

Cecilia Tallis: My brother and I found the two of them down by the lake.

Police Inspector: You didn't see anyone else?

Cecilia Tallis: I wouldn't necessarily believe everything Briony tells you. She's rather fanciful.

---

Cecilia Tallis: [in a letter] My darling, Briony found my address somehow and sent a letter. The first surprise was she didn't go up to Cambridge. She's doing nurses' training at my old hospital. I think she may be doing this as some kind of penance. She says she's

beginning to get the full grasp of what she did and what it meant. She wants to come and talk to me. I love you. I'll wait for you. Come back. Come back to me.

---

Briony - 18 years old: I want to go in front of a judge and change my evidence, Cee.

Cecilia Tallis: Don't call me that!

[pause]

Cecilia Tallis: Please don't call me that.

---

Cecilia Tallis: Come back. Come back to me.

---

Briony Tallis, aged 13: How can you hate plays?

---

Sister Drummond: Now go and wash the blood of your face.

---

Briony - 18 years old: There is no Briony.

---

Robbie Turner: Have you been in touch with your family?

Cecilia Tallis: No I told you I wouldnt. Leon waited outside the hospital last week I just pushed past him.

Robbie Turner: Cee, you dont owe me anything.

Cecilia Tallis: Robbie didnt you read my letters? "Had I been allowed to visit you? Had they let me, every day, I would have been there every day.

Robbie Turner: Yes but, if all we have, rests on a few moments in a library three and a half years ago then I am not sure, I dont know...

Cecilia Tallis: Robbie, look at me, come back, come back to me.

---

Cecilia Tallis: Robbie...

Robbie Turner: Cecilia...

Cecilia Tallis: I love you...

Robbie Turner: I love you.

---

Robbie Turner: ...if all we have rests in a few moments in a library three and a half years ago, then I don't know... I don't...

Cecilia Tallis: Robbie... look at me. Look at me. Come back. Come back to me.

---

Tommy Nettle: Never trust a sailor on dry land.

---

Older Briony: So, my sister and Robbie were never able to have the time together they both so longed for... and deserved. Which ever since I've... ever since I've always felt I prevented. But what sense of hope or satisfaction could a reader derive from an ending like that? So in the book, I wanted to give Robbie and Cecilia what they lost out on in life. I'd like to think this isn't weakness or... evasion... but a final act of kindness. I gave them their happiness.

---

Cecilia Tallis: There isn't much time. Robbie has to report for duty at six and he's got a train to catch. So sit down. There are some things you're going to do for us.

[Briony and Cecilia sit in the kitchen. Robbie leans on the table, looming over them]

Robbie Turner: You'll go to your parents as soon as you can and tell them everything they need to know to be convinced that your evidence was false. You'll go and see a solicitor and make a statement and have it signed and witnessed and send copies to us. Is that clear?

Cecilia Tallis: Yes.

Robbie Turner: Then you'll write a detailed letter to me, explaining everything that led up to you saying you saw me by the lake.

Cecilia Tallis: Try and include whatever you can remember of what Danny Hardman was doing that night.

Briony - 18 years old: Hardman?

Robbie Turner: Yes!

Briony - 18 years old: It wasn't Danny Hardman. It was Leon's friend, Marshall.

[Cecilia and Robbie look at her, astonished]

Cecilia Tallis: I don't believe you.

Briony - 18 years old: He's married Lola; I've just come from their wedding.

[Silence. Finally, Robbie exhales the breath he's been holding, Cecilia looks across at him]

Cecilia Tallis: Lola won't be able to testify against him now. He's immune.

[Robbie straightens up and turns away, grappling with a riot of emotions; silence; finally, Briony stands up and speaks, very formal]

Briony - 18 years old: I'm very, very sorry for the terrible distress that I have caused. I'm very, very sorry.

Robbie Turner: Just do as I have asked of you. Write it all down. Just the truth. No rhymes, no embellishments, no adjectives. And then leave us be.

Briony - 18 years old: I will. I promise.

[she leaves abruptly, her eyes brimming with tears]

---

Tommy Nettle: No one speaks the fucking lingo out here. You can't say 'pass the biscuit' or 'where's me hand grenade?', they just shrug. Cause they hate us too. I mean, that's the point. We fight in France and the French fucking hate us. Make me Home Secretary and I'll sort this out in a fucking minute. We got India and Africa, right? Jerry can have France and Belgium and whatever else they want. Who's fucking ever been to Poland?

It's all about room, Empire. They want more empire, give 'em this shithole, we keep ours and it's Bob's your uncle and Fanny's your fucking aunt! Think about it.

---

Cecilia Tallis: [to Robbie] My darling, Briony found my address somehow and sent a letter. The first surprise was she didn't go up to Cambridge. She's doing nurse's training at my old hospital. I think she may be doing this as some kind of penance. She says she's beginning to get the full grasp of what she did and what it meant. She wants to come and talk to me.

[she kisses the letter and posts it]

Cecilia Tallis: I love you. I'll wait for you.

---

Robbie Turner: Come on, pal. You should be getting dressed.

Briony Tallis, aged 13: If I fell in the river, would you save me?

Robbie Turner: Of course.

[Briony jumps into the water and Robbie dives after her; eventually, he pulls her out of the water and drops her near the bank]

Briony Tallis, aged 13: Thank you, thank you, thank you...

Robbie Turner: That was an incredibly bloody stupid thing to do.

Briony Tallis, aged 13: I wanted you to save me.

Robbie Turner: Don't you know how easily you could have drowned?

Briony Tallis, aged 13: You saved me.

Robbie Turner: You stupid child! You could have killed us both! Is that your idea of a joke?

[she looks at him for a moment, shocked by his tone, but defiant nonetheless]

Briony Tallis, aged 13: I want to thank you for saving my life. I'll be eternally grateful to you.

[he strides away angrily, into the woods, leaving Briony disconsolate amidst the cow parsley]

---

Briony - 18 years old: Dear Cecilia, Please don't throw this away without reading it. As you'll have seen from the notepaper, I'm here at St. Thomas's, doing my nurses' training. I decided not to take up my place at Cambridge. I decided I wanted to make myself useful, do something practical. But no matter how hard I work, no matter how long the hours, I can't escape from what I did and what it meant, the full extent of which I'm only now beginning to grasp. Cee, please write and tell me we can meet. Your sister, Briony.

## **Meet the Robinsons – 2007 Movie**

Walt Disney quote at the end of the movie is worth remembering.

Around here, however, we don't look backwards for very long. We keep moving forward, opening up new doors and doing new things, because we're curious ... and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.

## Music and Lyrics – 2007 Movie

*Music and Lyrics* is a 2007 movie starring Hugh Grant as Alex and Drew Barrymore as Sophie. This romantic comedy is soft and lovable enough that many viewers will want to sink into its warm embrace and, at the end, have a smile. Alex and Sophie have chemistry. Sophie has been unlucky in love. Alex was part of 1980's British has-been one-hit wonder group. His songs were "desert," while other great groups provided by "dinner." At the end, Alex sings a song for Sophie that, she says, is dinner. They have a cute first meeting. He discovers she has a knack for writing lyrics, and he needs some lyrics for a new job for the popular singer of today, Cora. The movie is parody of 1980s era music videos, especially the bad haircuts and tight pants.

In one scene (0:53:47 to 0:55), Sophie laments the power that her old boyfriend still has over her. You see, he wrote a book in which the main character, Sally, seems patterned after her. "The worst part is that he still has some kind of power over me. He still has some kind of power over me." Alex responds, "How can that possibly be? The guy is a jerk." "That is easy for you to say." Alex says, "No, he is a jerk. It's not a question. He is a jerk. Okay, here's what I think. I think that the truth is that you are terrified of losing Sally Michaels because then you would have nothing to hide behind and you'd have to stand on your own feet." After a pause, she says, "Wow. I didn't see that coming." Alex says, "No, well, I have amazing insight. I would use it on myself, only I don't have any problems. And I will tell you my other insight. I think you are way too talented and gifted and unusual to let anyone keep you from standing.

## Pride – 2007 Movie

*Pride* is a 2007 movie, rated PG-13, running 108 minutes. It earned \$7 million in the USA. Terrence Howard plays Jim Ellis, Bernie Mac plays Elston, Tom Arnold plays Blink, and Kimberly Elise plays Sue Davis.

Jim Ellis, in real life, was a college-educated African-American in 1973 Philadelphia. He cannot find a job. Driven by his love of competitive swimming, Jim converts an abandoned recreational pool hall in a Philadelphia slum with the help of Elston, a local janitor. However, when city officials mark the new Philadelphia Department of Recreation for demolition, Jim fights back--by starting the city's first African-American swim team. Recruiting troubled teens from the streets, Jim struggles to transform a motley team of novices into capable swimmers--all in time for the upcoming state championships. However, as racism, violence and an unsympathetic city official threaten to tear the team apart, Jim must do everything he can to convince his swimmers that victory, both in and out of the pool, is within their reach.

Elston, the crusty rec center maintenance man, aids Ellis in getting the pool cleaned up and filled and then peopled with local neighborhood candidates for a swim team. As Coach Ellis guides his team to the nationals at the University of Baltimore, he must contend with his own temper as well as his desire to one-up the coach of a snippy preppy racist championship swim team.

When the city removes the basketball rims from the courts outside, local players drift into the center to discover a remarkably pristine swimming pool. Pretty soon, Jim, who swam competitively in college, is teaching them the butterfly and back strokes. Predictably, the guys are soon eager for competition. And, predictably, their first meet

takes place against the preppy Main Line school team coached by Arnold. They get humiliated. One swimmer hits his head against the end of the pool. Another loses his trunks.

Therefore, the team buckles down to work, learns to swim much better and gets two more rematches with their nemesis team. In one, the white team refuses to compete in the Rec Center's pool. In the other, a state championship is on the line. The outcome also is predictable.

In one scene (26:29 to 29:05, 32:00 to 33:39), Ellis begins to train the team. Andre will swim faster if he will cup his hand. Andre can swim faster than Ellis, the janitor, can. "20 bucks says I dust your ass off in a race." They make fun of his "blue panties." Ellis gives Andre a head start, but easily wins. Ellis starts telling the team about effort and discipline.

## **Freedom Writers – 2007 Movie**

*Freedom Writers* is a 2007 drama film. It runs 123 minutes. It received a PG-13 rating. It made \$36.5 million in the USA. It stars Hilary Swank as Erin Gruwell.

Erin is an idealistic English teacher must work hard to engage her students who belong to gangs and are not interested in school. Fresh-faced, idealistic twenty-three-year-old Erin Gruwell is ready to take on the world as she steps inside Wilson High School for her first day of teaching. Her class, a diverse group of racially charged teenagers from different walks of life--African Americans, Latinos, Asians, juvenile delinquents, gang members, and underprivileged students from poor neighborhoods--hope for nothing more than to make it through the day. On the surface, the only thing they share is their hatred for each other and the understanding that they are simply being warehoused in the educational system until they are old enough to disappear. Despite her students' obstinate refusal to participate during class, Erin tries various means to engage them on a daily basis. Then ghetto reality steps in to focus the picture. A racially motivated gang shooting witnessed by a Latina gang member in Erin's class, and an ugly racial cartoon that Erin intercepts during class, become the most unwittingly dynamic teaching aids. They spark a transformation in the classroom, compel them to listen and force her to take off her idealistic blinders and take in the kids' survival stories of their undeclared war on the streets. Erin begins to connect with them. She brings in music from the 'Hood, and literature from another kind of ghetto, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and with these simple tools she opens her students' eyes to the experiences of those suffering intolerance throughout the world and the struggles of those outside their own communities. Knowing that every one of her students has a story to tell, Erin encourages them to keep a daily journal of their thoughts and experiences. After sharing their stories with one another, the students see their shared experience for the first time and open up to the idea that there are possibilities in life outside of making it to the age of eighteen.

In one scene (1:03:28 to 1:07:29), Erin takes her class to a holocaust museum. She then had survivors of the holocaust meet her class at a restaurant.

In one scene (1:25:35 to 1:28:54), Miep Gies, the woman who hid Anne Frank in her home, comes to the class. Erin had worked hard to bring her there. She told them her story. "The bounty on a Jew was about \$2. Someone desperate for money told the Gestapo. On August 4<sup>th</sup>, they stormed into my office, and a man pointed a gun at me and



said, “not a sound. Not one word. And then they went straight upstairs to the attic. I felt so helpless. I could hear Anne screaming, objects being thrown around. So, I ran back to my house. I looked for an earring or knick-knacks, you know, anything I could take back with me to bribe them. So I took this back with me, all these things, and the soldier there took out his gun and put it against my head. You could be shot for hiding a Jew or go to a camp. Another soldier recognized my accent. He was Austrian, and so was I, but I had been adopted by a Dutch family. So, he told the soldier with the gun to let me go. There isn't a day that I don't remember August 4<sup>th</sup>. And I think about Anne Frank.” A young man raises his hand, “I've never had a hero before. But you are my hero.” “Oh no, young man, I am not a hero. No. I did what I had to do, because it was the right thing to do. That is all. You know, we are all ordinary people. But even an ordinary secretary or a housewife or a teenager can, within their own small ways, turn on a small light in a dark room. Ja? I have read your letters, and your teacher has been telling me many things about your experiences. You are the heroes. You are heroes every day. Your faces are engraved in my heart.”

## **Amazing Grace – 2006 Movie**

*Amazing Grace* is a 2006 movie. Ioan Gruffudd played Wilberforce and Albert Finney plays John Newton. The film has grossed \$21,250,683 domestically as of June 14, 2007. Worldwide box office as of August 26, 2007 stands at \$29,949,690. "Amazing Grace" was named "Best Spiritual Film of 2008" in the third annual "Beliefnet Film Awards".

The movie tells the story of the life of William Wilberforce (1759-1833), who was responsible for the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire in 1807. At that time, the British Empire was heavily dependent upon the slave trade. Wilberforce dedicated his entire life to fighting the injustice. Wilberforce was idealistic, compassionate, eloquent, and tenacious. Being the heir to a sizable fortune, he was elected to parliament at 23 years old. He experienced a dramatic spiritual conversion a few years later. He struggled with his political vocation. He was not convinced that he could serve God and Parliament at the same time. He met John Newton, a former slave ship captain and author of the hymn “Amazing Grace.”

It might be helpful to cover some of the story of Newton at this point, something only hinted at in the movie. Newton was born into a seafaring family in England. His mother was a godly woman. Faith gave her life meaning. She died when he was 7, and he recalled as the sweetest remembrance of childhood the soft and tender voice of his mother at prayer.

His father soon married again, and John left school four years later to go to sea with him. He quickly adopted the vulgar life of common seamen, though the memory of his mother's faith remained. "I saw the necessity of religion as a means of escaping hell," he would recall many years later, "but I loved sin."

On shore leave, he was seized by a press gang and taken aboard HMS Harwich. Life grew coarser. He ran away, was captured and taken back to the Harwich and put in chains, stripped before the mast, and flogged. "The Lord had by all appearances given me up to judicial hardness," he recalled. "I was capable of anything. I had not the least fear of

God, nor the least sensibility of conscience. I was firmly persuaded that after death, I should merely cease to be."

The captain of the Harwich traded him to the skipper of a slaving ship, bound for West Africa to take aboard a human cargo. "At this period of my life," he later reflected, "I was big with mischief and, like one afflicted with a pestilence, was capable of spreading a taint wherever I went." John's new captain took a liking to him, however, and took him to his plantation on an island off the African coast, where he had taken as his wife a beautiful but cruel African princess. She grew jealous of her husband's friendship with John, and was pleased when it was time for them to sail once more. But John fell ill, and the captain left John in his wife's care.

The ship was hardly over the horizon when she ordered him from her house and threw him into a pig sty, and gave him a board for a bed and a log for a pillow. He was left alone, in delirium, to die. Miraculously, he did not die. She kept him in chains, in a cage like an animal, and fed him swill from her table. Word spread through the district that a black woman was keeping a white slave, and many came to watch her taunt him. They threw limes and stones at him, mocking his misery. He would have starved if the slaves, waiting for a ship to take them to the Americas, had not shared their meager scraps of food.

Five years passed, and the captain returned. When John told him how he had been treated, he branded John a thief and a liar. When they sailed again, John was treated ever more harshly. He was given only the entrails of animals butchered for the crew's mess. "The voyage quite broke my constitution," he would recall, "and the effects would always remain with me as a needful memento of the service of wages and sin."

Like Job, he became a magnet for adversity. His ship wrecked in a storm, and he despaired that God had mercy left for him after his life of hostile indifference to the Gospel. "During the time I was engaged in the slave trade," he would write, "I never had the least scruple to its lawfulness." Yet the wanton sinner, the arrogant blasphemer, the mocker of the faith of others, was finally driven to his knees: "My prayer was like the cry of ravens, which yet the Lord does not disdain to hear."

Rescued, he made his way back to England, to reflect on the mercies God had shown him in his awful life. He fell under the influence of George Whitefield and John Wesley, and was born again into the new life in Christ. He began to preach the Gospel, which at last he understood.

Two days short of Christmas 1807, he died, at the age of 82, and left a dazzling testimony to the amazing miracle of the Christmas story. "I commit my soul to my gracious God and Savior, who mercifully spared and preserved me, when I was an apostate, a blasphemer and an infidel, and delivered me from that state on the coast of Africa into which my obstinate wickedness had plunged me." This is his testimony, which, set to music, has become the favorite hymn of Christendom.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound  
that saved a wretch like me;  
I once was lost, but now am found  
Was blind, but now I see.  
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear  
and grace my fears relieved.

How precious did that grace appear,  
the hour I first believed.  
Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come.  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far  
and grace will lead me home.

Newton convinces Wilberforce that combating slavery would be doing the work of heaven. “The principles of Christianity require action as well as meditation,” says Newton. Newton told him:

“God has raised you up for the good of the church and the good of the nation, maintain your friendship with Pitt, continue in Parliament, who knows that but for such a time as this God has brought you into public life and has a purpose for you.”

Wilberforce recalled the meeting in this way, “When I came away, my mind was in a calm, tranquil state, more humbled, looking more devoutly up to God.” In his first speech to Parliament regarding the slave trade, he described the unfathomable conditions upon the slave ships and the despicable practice of slavery. After three hours, he concluded by telling his colleagues:

Having heard all this you may choose to look the other way, but you can never again say that you did not know.

Between 1787 and 1807, Wilberforce campaigned tirelessly for a legislated end to the British slave trade. He introduced the measure repeatedly, and repeatedly moneyed interests that supported political leaders defeated his “perennial resolution”.

In 1791, John Wesley wrote what he his final letter to encourage Wilberforce.

“Unless God has raised you for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? O be not weary of well doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.”

In 1807, the vote went in his favor 287 to 16, an event historian G.M. Trevelyan called “one of the turning events in the history of the world.”

In later decades, Abraham Lincoln remembered Wilberforce, saying he recalled the man who ended the slave trade, but could not name one man who tried to keep it alive.

While the slave trade ended in England in 1807, he continued to work to abolish slavery in England. In 1833, a bill passed that finally outlawed slavery. Remember, it took a costly civil war to end slavery in the United States. Wilberforce died three days later.

Trafficking in persons is still a global threat to the lives and freedom of millions of men, women, and children, according to a U. S. State department report in 2006. Burma and North Korea still sponsor slavery. Human trafficking, however, involves organized crime groups who make huge sums of money at the expense of trafficking victims and our societies. In his book *Not for Sale*, David Batstone says that 27 million slaves exist in our world today. Millions of children experience exploitation for their domestic labor.

In one scene (0:18:23 to 0:21:00), Wilberforce, in the woods, starts speaking to God that he feels as if he must speak to God in secret. Richard the Butler arrives to ask him what he is to do with a beggar. Wilberforce has him feed the man breakfast. I know that laying down on the grass is not a normal thing to do. I know I have been doing many odd things lately. I have 10,000 engagements in politics today, and all I want to do is stay out here and look at spider webs. I have found God. "You have found God," Richard said. I think God found me. Do you have any idea how inconvenient that is and how crazy it will sound?" Richard responded, "It would be sad thing for a man to be so well known to everyone else, and so little known to himself."

In one scene, (at 23 minutes into the film) William Pitt, who would soon be prime minister, said, "Will you use your beautiful voice to praise the Lord or change the world?"

In one scene (26:03 to 30:25) a table conversation occurs around slavery. "We understand you are struggling with whether you should do the work of God or the work of an activist. We humbly suggest that you can do both."

In the following scene (until 36:05), he meets John Newton, who tells him that he still lives with the ghosts of 20,000 slaves that he delivered to slaveholders on slave ships. "Do it John, for God's sake."

In one scene (44:31 to 47:11) the former Equino brought William Wilberforce to a slave ship. For amusement, they chained women and raped them. During storms, they threw slaves overboard to lighten the load. Wilberforce believed that if the members of Parliament could see the horror of the slave ships, they would stop it. In one scene (55:11 to 56:51), he encourages the people who are on a tour ship to look at the slave ship Madagascar. Smell the odor of death. "Remember that God made men equal." People boycotted sugar grown by slaves. He believed they should have won the vote in one session of Parliament. He brought a petition to Parliament, signed by 390,000 people.

The accusation against Wilberforce is that he obeys "the preacher in his head."

In one scene (1:25:53 to 29: 48) John Newton finally writes his confession of his complicity in the slave trade. "We were apes. They were humans." "I am weeping. I couldn't weep until I wrote this confession."

John Newton: Although my memory's fading, I remember two things very clearly. I'm a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior.

---

William Wilberforce: No matter how loud you shout, you will not drown out the voice of the people!

Lord Tarleton: People?

---

William Wilberforce: I want you to remember that smell... remember the Madagascar... remember, God made men equal.

---

John Newton: [reciting his song] "I once was blind but now I see". Didn't I write that?  
William Wilberforce: Yes, you did.  
John Newton: Now at last it's true.

---

Pitt the Younger: As your Prime Minister, I urge you caution  
William Wilberforce: And as my friend?  
Pitt the Younger: To hell with caution.

---

Barbara Wilberforce: It seems to me, that if there is a bad taste in your mouth, you spit it out. You don't constantly swallow it back.

---

Barbara Wilberforce: You still have passion! That matters more!

---

William Wilberforce: [Fox walks in unexpectedly] Dear God.  
Lord Charles Fox: Well, almost. I spent eighteen months being torn apart in the House by you Mr. Wilberforce. I thought I'd find out what it feels like on your side. Any of you saints drink?  
Thomas Clarkson: Well, this one bloody does!

---

Thomas Clarkson: [to the baby in his arms] I was forced to recite that poem when I was a lad. I have no idea what it means, but I suppose you should have to learn it too.  
[sees Wilber and hears him calling]  
Thomas Clarkson: Would you look at that. Wilber's got his voice back.

---

Richard the Butler: When I was 15 I almost run away with the circus. They said I could have been an acrobat.

---

William Wilberforce: No one of our age has ever taken power.  
Pitt the Younger: Which is why we're too young to realize certain things are impossible. Which is why we will do them anyway.

---

Thomas Clarkson: Beautiful house. Sweet, little... rabbit.  
William Wilberforce: It's a hare actually.

---

John Newton: God sometimes does His work with gentle drizzle, not storms. Drip. Drip.

---

William Wilberforce: I thought time might have changed you.  
John Newton: It has. I'm older.

---

William Wilberforce: I'm against flowers in church. What have you to say?  
Barbara Wilberforce: I am \*for\* them.  
William Wilberforce: [both pause]  
William Wilberforce: [resignedly] As am I.

---

MP Abolition supporter: I sent a note of thanks to those who voted for us.  
Thomas Clarkson: [sarcastically] Oh, how sweet of you.

---

Oloudaqh Equiano: Your life is a thread. It breaks, or it doesn't break.

---

William Wilberforce: Oh, if the House of Lords could hear the idiotic way we carry on, they'd ban anyone under the age of 30 from holding high office again.

---

Pitt the Younger: Why is it you only feel the thorns when you stop running?  
William Wilberforce: Is that some sort of heavy metaphorical advice?

---

William Wilberforce: Remember that God made men equal.

---

Pitt the Younger: Trouble is, Doctor, he doesn't believe he has a body. Utterly careless of it.

---

William Wilberforce: Also, Barbara and I have discovered that we're both impatient and prone to rash decisions. But she wants to tell you about it herself.

---

Pitt the Younger: Barbara. You have my deepest condolences.  
Barbara Wilberforce: [feigning seriousness] Thank you.  
Pitt the Younger: But do me a favour. Make him eat some of his pets.  
Barbara Wilberforce: [picking up rabbit] I rather like them.

Pitt the Younger: I like them, too - in brandy sauce.

---

Pitt the Younger: I don't care how important this is. I'll finish my shot.

Pitt the Younger: [aims with club]

Pitt the Younger: [exasperated] Oh, for God's sake, what is it?

---

William Wilberforce: I bow to my friend in all superior matters regarding the pox.

---

Richard the Butler: You found God, sir?

William Wilberforce: I think He found me.

---

William Wilberforce: In my heart I want spider's webs!

---

Richard the Butler: I don't just dust yer books, sir.

---

Pitt the Younger: Is that the main course?

William Wilberforce: No. It's the Duke of Clarence.

---

Pitt the Younger: I find that the older I get, the more tender I become.

---

Richard the Butler: Great changes are easier than small ones. Sir Francis Bacon.

---

William Wilberforce: You're dressing very simply these days.

John Newton: I'm a simple man.

---

Thomas Clarkson: Why did you wait until your butler had left before you got out of the box?

William Wilberforce: They already think I'm mad.

---

Henry Thornton: [to Wilber] There's creeping ivy or something like that. You really should see it.

Marianne Thornton: [matter-of-factly] Barbara, you really must go and see it, too.

---

William Wilberforce: This is why I really shouldn't talk about it.

Barbara Wilberforce: I think you should.

[pause]

Barbara Wilberforce: There, we found something we don't agree on.

---

Richard the Butler: He's an optimist. Bloody incurable.

---

Lord Tarleton: I can hardly believe my ears!

Heckler: And we can hardly believe your mouth!

---

William Wilberforce: Perhaps we should begin this journey with a first step.

---

William Wilberforce: [after Pitt beats him running] It's my ministerial duty to let you win.

---

William Wilberforce: Where are you going?

Lord Charles Fox: To look up the word integrity.

---

Pitt the Younger: [to Lord Fox] You always look more at home when you're doing something devious.

---

William Wilberforce: God has set before me two great objects.

---

Barbara Wilberforce: Because after night comes day.

---

Marianne Thornton: What time did Barbara leave?

William Wilberforce: Late. I mean early.

---

Marianne Thornton: [at Barbara's wedding reception] Have you forgiven us, yet?

Barbara Wilberforce: Never.

---

Barbara Wilberforce: You're discussing politics with your eyes. You might as well do it with your mouths.

---

Pitt the Younger: It's your wedding day - I agree with everything you say.



---

William Wilberforce: I never change.  
Pitt the Younger: Well, hurrah for you.

---

William Wilberforce: I had heard your sight was fading.  
John Newton: Well, now it's faded altogether. I never do things by halves. God decided I'd seen enough.

---

John Newton: [through tears] I'm weeping. I couldn't weep till I wrote this.

---

Barbara Wilberforce: Well I would have been bored by botany.

---

James Stephen: Don't I get to wash or sleep?  
William Wilberforce: Sleep?  
James Stephen: You haven't changed at all, William!

---

James Stephen: So, this time, gentlemen, we must not fail them.

---

James Stephen: It's Latin. Loosely translated, it means... we cheat.

---

Thomas Clarkson: It promotes the war effort, patriotism, and... all that.  
Pitt the Younger: Since when have you been interested in the war effort, patriotism, and... all that?

---

Thomas Clarkson: We don't want any fuss. We just need somebody who is... really, really boring.

---

Pitt the Younger: [on his deathbed] No more excuses, Wilber. Finish them off.

---

Thomas Clarkson: [at Equiano's grave] As you know, Equiano, I rarely drink.

---

William Wilberforce: It's only painful to talk about because we haven't changed anything.

---

William Wilberforce: You wake me up to give me medicine to help me sleep?

---

Lord Charles Fox: When people speak of great men, they think of men like Napoleon - men of violence. Rarely do they think of peaceful men. But contrast the reception they will receive when they return home from their battles. Napoleon will arrive in pomp and in power, a man who's achieved the very summit of earthly ambition. And yet his dreams will be haunted by the oppressions of war. William Wilberforce, however, will return to his family, lay his head on his pillow and remember: the slave trade is no more.

---

Duke of Clarence: Noblesse oblige.

Lord Tarleton: What the bloody hell does that mean?

Duke of Clarence: It means: my nobility obliges me to recognize the virtue of an exceptional commoner

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John Newton: Though I have lost my memory, two things I know. I am a great sinner and Christ is a great savior.

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Lord Tarleton: [walks into what looks like an empty room] Where the hell is everyone?

Lord Charles Fox: Everybody's at the races in Epsom. They were given free tickets. I saved one for you.

[holds up ticket]

Lord Charles Fox: A free gift from William Wilburforce.

[smiles]

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Barbara Wilberforce: Mr. Wilberforce, I understand that you have an interest in Botany.

William Wilberforce: Botnay, Ms. Spooner? What makes you think I would have interest in something as tedious as Botany?

Barbara Wilberforce: [pause, then snorts and chokes with laughter]

William Wilberforce: [to the concerned people at the table] Sorry, it's a private joke.

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## **Blood Diamond – 2006 Movie**

*Blood Diamond* is a 2006 movie. It runs 131 min. It received an R rating. Leonardo DiCaprio is Danny and Solomon Vandy is Djimon Hounsou. The film received nominations for five Academy Awards including Best Actor (DiCaprio) and Best Supporting Actor (Hounsou). It made in the USA \$57,366,262

The story involves so-called conflict diamonds, illicitly mined stones that have been used to finance some of the most vicious wars in Africa. Danny Archer is a Rhodesian-born diamond smuggler who, having been orphaned during his native country's violent struggles in the 1970s, has spent most of his 30-some years crisscrossing the continent as a soldier of fortune and a merchant of misery. He has touselled and tanned, with a long, slicing gait and a killer smile. Yet, he is also scum, even

though the film will eventually move him toward redemption. Solomon hopes to reunite with his wife and three children, from whom he has been violently separated; Danny just wants a score big enough to pay his way permanently out of Africa.

Set against the backdrop of civil war and chaos in 1990's Sierra Leone, Danny Archer, a South African mercenary, and Solomon Vandy, a Mende fisherman are joined in a common quest to recover a rare pink diamond that can transform their lives. While in prison for smuggling, Archer learns that Solomon--who was taken from his family and forced to work in the diamond fields--has found and hidden the extraordinary rough stone. With the help of Maddy Bowen, an American journalist whose idealism is tempered by a deepening connection with Archer, the two men embark on a trek through rebel territory--a journey that could save Solomon's family and give Archer the second chance he thought he would never have.

In one scene (2:05:16 to 2:08:48), Danny Archer calls the reporter Maddy in Europe. Rather than taking the diamond he had plotted to steal throughout the entire movie, Archer stays in Africa as his friend leaves with the diamond that is rightfully his. She wants to help him get home, but his enemies are closing in. They will kill him. "You have a real story now. Write the hell out of it," he says. He tells her that he has a wonderful view. He knows it will be his last view of this earth. Archer tells the reporter that he is right where he ought to be (which in his case is dying at the expense of protecting his friend and son who fly off in a helicopter". His blood drips upon the ground.

Several controversies accompany this film.

When the plot of the film became public, De Beers, the South African diamond mining and trading company, maintained that the trade in conflict diamonds had been reduced from 4% to 1% of total purchases by the Kimberley Process. De Beers denied a suggestion that the company had pushed for the film to contain a disclaimer to the effect that the events it portrayed were fictional and outdated.

More recently, the New York Post reported that Warner Bros. Pictures had promised that 27 child and teenage film extras who were amputees would receive prosthetics once the film shoot was done. Several months after the completion of filming, however, the prosthetics had not been supplied, and the studio reportedly told the amputees they had to wait until the December 2006 release of the film to maximize a public relations boost. In the meantime, the private charity Eastern Cape assisted in supplying prosthetics to the amputees. An article in L.A. Weekly countered these allegations. It stated that Warner Bros. had not promised the prosthetics, but that the cast and crew raised between \$200,000 and \$400,000 to begin a "Blood Diamond Fund", which was then matched by Warner Bros. and "administered by a Maputo-based international accountancy firm under the supervision of Laws and João Ribeiro, the production managers in Mozambique."

The film was released in the midst of an upsurge in mass media publicity about the conflict-diamond trade, including a song by rapper Kanye West entitled "Diamonds from Sierra Leone," a VH1 documentary about conditions in Sierra Leone called *Bling* and the Nicholas Cage film *Lord of War*.

## The Nativity Story – 2006 Movie

*The Nativity Story* is a 2006 drama and religious movie. It received a PG rating. It runs 100 min. It made \$37.6 million in the USA. Keisha Castle-Hughes is Mary, Oscar Isaac is Joseph, Hiam Abbass is Anna, Mary's Mother, Shaun Toub is Joaquim, Mary's Father, Alexander Siddig is the Archangel Gabriel, Nadim Sawalha is Melchior, Eriq Ebouaney is Balthasar, Stefan Kalipha is Gaspar, Said Amadis is Tero, Stanley Townsend is Zechariah, Ciaran Hinds is King Herod, and Shohreh Aghdashloo is Elizabeth.

The movie gives an account of Jesus' birth beginning the year before until the flight into Egypt. Few stories are more familiar than the one told in "The Nativity Story"--a film about the trials of Mary and Joseph, the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem and the birth of Christ. Yet, this movie makes it seem fresh and vital. Covering the events from the time of Zechariah's vision in the temple up to Herod's massacre of the innocents, and the flight of Mary and Joseph into Egypt, the movie retells the story with art and simplicity, without the characters becoming creche figurines. The challenge in producing a movie like this is to find enough conventional movie elements — suspense, realistic characters, convincing dialogue — without selling out the scriptural source. How do you make piety entertaining without seeming impious?

Herod's massacre is their framing device. We see the mad monarch ordering the slaughter at the beginning. Then we move back to the events that led up to it: the birth of John the Baptist, the lunacies of Herod and his tax plan, the long journey of Joseph and Mary into Bethlehem, and the Nativity as witnessed by the shepherds and the Three Wise Men--Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar.

The three wise men (Nadim Sawalha, Eriq Ebouaney and Stefan Kalipha) provide some comic relief along with the gold, frankincense and myrrh. They quarrel and kvetch their way across the desert like Hope and Crosby (or Moe, Larry and Curly) on the road to Morocco (which happens to be where much of "The Nativity Story" was filmed).

In one scene (56:16 to 57:37), Joseph and Mary are on the way to Jerusalem. They stop and Joseph wonders if he will be able to teach Jesus anything. Mary asks Joseph what the angel said in the dream. After he relates what the angel said, he said the angel told him not to be afraid. Mary says, "Are you." "Yes, are you." "Yes." Then Mary says, "Do you ever wonder when we'll know?" "Know. Know what?" "When he's more than just a child." "Will it be something he says? A look in his eye?" Joseph says, "I wonder if I will even be able to teach him anything.

In one scene (1:12:17 to 1:13:30; 1:19:53 to 1:27:27), Mary and Joseph stop to warm themselves at the shepherd's fire. "Your woman looks cold," says the shepherd. "I will tell our child about your kindness," says Mary. "My father told me a long time ago that we are all given something. A gift. Your gift is what you carry inside." Mary says, "What was your gift?" The shepherd says, "Nothing but the hope of waiting for one." After Mary gives birth, the wise men see the star, one says, "How is your faith now." An angel tells the shepherd to go to Bethlehem. "Are you well," says Joseph. "I have been given all the strength I asked for. Strength from God. And from you." The shepherd comes to give honor to the child. The shepherd reaches out to touch the baby. Mary holds Jesus out to him saying, "He is for all mankind."

## Akeelah and the Bee – 2006 Movie

*Akeelah and the Bee* is a 2006 drama and family movie. It received a PG rating. It runs 112 minutes. It made \$18.8 million in the USA. It received the nomination for best live action family film from Broadcast Film Critics Association. Angela Bassett plays Tanya Anderson, Keke Palmer (Chicago Film Critics Circle nomination for most promising performer) is Akeelah Anderson, Laurence Fishburne is Dr. Joshua Larabee, and Curtis Armstrong is Mr. Welch, J. R. Villarreal is Javier, and Sean Michael Afable is Dylan. Black Reel Awards nominated Keke Palmer as best actress and best breakthrough performance, Aaron Zigman for best original score, best picture, Laurence Fishburne for best actor, and Angela Bassett for best supporting actress.

The following is the quote in the movie that any viewer would want to remember.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear that we are powerful beyond measure. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?"

A young girl from south Los Angeles becomes a spelling bee champion. Akeelah Anderson can spell. She can spell better than anyone in her school in South Central Los Angeles, and she might have a chance at the nationals. Who can say? She sees the National Spelling Bee on ESPN and is intrigued. She is also wary, because in her school there is danger in being labeled a "brainiac," and it's wiser to keep your smarts to yourself. This is a tragedy in some predominantly black schools: the other students punish excellence, possibly as an expression of their own low self-esteem. The thing with Akeelah is that she can spell, whether she wants to or not. Beating time with her hand against her thigh as sort of a metronome, she cranks out the letters and arrives triumphantly at the words. No, she does not have a photographic memory, nor is she channeling the occult as the heroine of "Bee Season" does. She is just a good speller. The story of Akeelah's ascent to the finals of the National Spelling Bee makes an uncommonly good movie, entertaining and actually inspirational, and with a few tears along the way. Her real chance at national success comes after a reluctant English professor agrees to act as her coach. This is Dr. Joshua Larabee, on a leave of absence after the death of his daughter. Coaching her is a way out of his own shell. Akeelah is mocked not only at school. Her own mother is against her. Tanya Anderson has issues after the death of her husband, and values Akeelah's homework above all else, including silly afterschool activities like spelling bees. Akeelah practices in secret, and after she wins a few bees even the tough kids in the neighborhood start cheering for her.

In one scene (47:06 to 50:40) Akeelah and Dr. Larabee discuss words. She does not want to read the essay that he has assigned. Larabee asks where big words come from. She wonders if they come from people with big brains. He then helps her understand that big words come from little words. If you learn the little words, you will learn the big words. "You will win using my methods. By first understanding the power of language, then by deconstructing it, breaking it down to its origins, to its roots, you'll consume it. You will own it."

"Akeelah and the Bee" sounds like a nice but conventional movie. What makes it transcend the material is the way she relates to the professor, and to two fellow contestants: a Mexican-American named Javier and an Asian American named Dylan.

Javier, who lives with his family in the upscale Woodland Hills neighborhood, invites Akeelah to his birthday party (unaware of what a long bus trip it involves). Dylan, driven by an obsessive father, treats the spelling bee like life-and-death, and takes no hostages. Hearing his father berate him, Akeelah feels an instinctive sympathy. As for Javier's feelings for Akeelah, at his party, he impulsively kisses her. "Why'd you do that?" she asks him. "I had an impulse. Are you gonna sue me for sexual harassment?"

The sessions between Akeelah and the professor are crucial to the film, because he is teaching her not only strategy but also how to be willing to win. No, he does not use self-help cliches. He is demanding, uncompromising, and he tells her repeatedly: "Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure." This quote, often attributed to Nelson Mandela, is actually from Marianne Williamson, but no less true for Akeelah (the movie does not attribute it).

Something happens during the finals of the National Bee that we do not see coming. It may move you deeply. Under enormous pressure, at a crucial moment, Akeelah does something good. We understand what is happening, but there is no way to say for sure. Even the judges sense or suspect something. However, Akeelah, improvising in the moment and out of her heart, makes it airtight. There is only one person who absolutely must understand what she is doing, and why -- and he does. This ending answers one of my problems with spelling bees, and spelling bee movies. It removes winning as the only objective. In the end, Dylan and Akeelah savor victory.

## **Little Miss Sunshine – 2006 Movie**

*Little Miss Sunshine* is a 2006 movie starring Greg Kinnear, who plays Richard, the head of a dysfunctional family. It becomes a satirical tale that deals with the virtues of refusing to conform to the superficiality of conventional American values. The movie is a gentle family satire and an American road movie. The opening scene lets us know that it's a movie about dreams and illusions. The family has an eventful 700-mile journey with the family of a little girl. They travel from Albuquerque to Redondo Beach. They approach the Ramada Inn where the pageant is being held, they can see the building from the freeway -- it looks close enough to touch, but they can't find the exit that will actually get them there. That moment has a lot to say, not only about the illusive, ever-shifting concrete landscape of Southern California, where you always seem to be moving down some predefined course but never quite arriving -- and about the elusive nature of those American Dreams we all chase, the detours we follow -- and the roads we do not.

"Little Miss Sunshine" shows us a world in which there's a form, a brochure, a procedure, a job title, a diet, a step-by-step program, a career path, a prize, a retirement community, to quantify, sort, categorize and process every human emotion or desire. Nothing exists that cannot be compartmentalized or turned into a self-improvement mantra about "winners and losers."

The opening montage introduces us to the Hoover family one at a time: Olive (Abigail Breslin) is the aspiring beauty queen. Her dad Richard (Greg Kinnear) is an astonishingly unsuccessful motivational speaker. He is pathologically obsessed with winning because he has never tasted it himself. Olive's mom Sheryl (Toni Collette) values family above all else, and her nerves are fraying over trying to hold this one together. Grandpa (Alan Arkin), Olive's coach, spends hours with her in the basement

working on her dance routine. Grandpa has been kicked out of a retirement home, for sleeping around and for snorting heroin. His philosophy is that you would have to be crazy to do smack when you are young, but when you get old, you would be crazy not to. Uncle Frank (Steve Carell), Sheryl's brother, is the second-most renowned Proust scholar in the world, and has just attempted suicide because he fell in love with a graduate student who dumped him for the foremost Proust scholar in the world. And Olive's teenage brother Dwayne (Paul Dano) hasn't spoken in nine months. He's not depressed, exactly; he's been reading Nietzsche and has taken a vow of silence while training to get into flight school. Plus, he hates everybody.

After our initial introductions, "Little Miss Sunshine" does something quite extraordinary: It gives us a single, nearly 20-minute scene built around a family dinner of takeout fried chicken in which we learn everything about Hoover family dynamics. Then, the movie moves on to a road trip in order to arrive at a beauty contest on time.

In one scene (1:09:33 to 1:11:48), the morose teenager Dwayne discovers that, while he has 20/20 vision, he is colorblind. Frank tells him that he cannot become a pilot because he is colorblind. This ends the dream he has had. Dwayne runs from the van and into a field. They are in a hurry to get to Redondo Beach. The mother tries to comfort him and get him to the car. Richard, the father, wants to leave another member of the family with him so that they can get to their destination. Richard suggests to the little sister, Olive, to try talking to him. Mother thinks they just have to wait. However, Olive goes out into the field. She is the only one who knows how to comfort Dwayne. She walks up to him, and places her hand on his shoulder. "Okay. Let's go." When they get up the hill, Dwayne says to his family, "I am sorry for what I said. I was upset. I didn't really mean them." The family accepts his apology, and they continue their road trip.

## **RV – 2006 Movie**

*RV* is a 2006 comedy, rated PG. It earned \$71.4 million in the USA. It stars Robin Williams, Jeff Daniels, Cheryl Hines, Kristin Chenoweth, and Joanna 'JoJo' Levesque.

The problem with traveling in a recreational vehicle, Jamie Munro tells her husband, is that you have to spend the night in an RV park with other RV people. "Remember," she tells him, "we're not friendly." The Munro family is not even very friendly with one another. As Bob Munro tells his wife, "We watch TV in four separate rooms and I.M. each other when it's time to eat dinner" Yet here they are in a gigantic rented RV, traveling cross-country to Colorado and calling it a vacation. Robin Williams is pop Munro, Cheryl Hines as his wife, and Joanna "JoJo" Levesque and Josh Hutcherson as their kids, Cassie and Carl. The boy is young enough to still be nice, but Cassie has arrived at that age when parents were put on this earth merely as an inconvenience for her.

Bob had originally thought to take the family to Hawaii, but then his obnoxious boss Todd (Will Arnett) ordered him to make a presentation in Boulder, Colo. Afraid to confess the business purpose of his trip, Bob simply rents the giant RV and announces that they'll go camping instead. "But we aren't a camping family," Jamie says. That becomes clear the moment Bob has to perform that least pleasant of RV tasks, emptying the sewage. In real life, one can theoretically perform this act with a minimum of

difficulty, but in the movies, it always results in the hero being covered by a disgusting substance that oddly never seems to involve toilet paper.

On their first night away, the Munros meet the friendly Gornicke family -- Travis and Mary Jo (Jeff Daniels and Kristin Chenoweth) and their kids Earl, Moon and Billy (Hunter Parrish, Chloe Sonnenfeld and Alex Ferris). The Gornickes are mighty friendly. They do country songs as a family. She sells franchise goods from the mobile home. They are masters of sewage, RV lore, route directions and poking their noses into the business of the Munros, who, as we recall, are not friendly people.

The movie settles down into a rhythm of the road, with the Munros getting into trouble and the Gornickes getting them out of it. There are troublesome raccoons, that emergency brake that does not work and a scene high up on Diablo Pass where Bob gets the RV balanced on a peak and tries to rock it back and forth to get it down on the road.

Now I am going to tell you a strange thing. At one point in the movie, an older man appears on the screen and serves them plates of food. They do not want meat. "It's OK," he says, "It's not meat. It's just organs." The strange thing is: We have never seen this man before, and we never see him again, and no one on screen seems to notice him. Who is he?

In one scene, 1:26:16 to 1:29:53, the daughter shares the insight she has received from her father. "Dad, I get it. In order to succeed, sometimes you have to do what they want." The boss tells Bob that if he is successful in his presentation to the company, he will have his own jet. If you want to know yourself, put your family in an RV and start traveling. The Gornicke family are hicks, but now, he is proud to call them his friends. The young men who started the company have nursed their baby from humble beginnings. Now, they have to decide whether to merge with a much larger company. If they do this, their company will grow beyond anything they imagined. They will have more money they imagined. (Note he uses the words "massage your ass"). Yet, in spite of all the positives, if they decide to merge, it will be the worst mistake they have ever made. When Bob says this, Todd is upset and fires him. In the end, the company hires him to help them go national.

## **Rocky Balboa – 2006 Movie**

*Rocky Balboa* is a 2006 movie starring Sylvester Stallone as Rocky, the sixth edition of the Rocky series, 30 years after the original. Many consider it the best since the original. Stallone wrote and directed it.

Rocky owns a restaurant now, named after his late wife, Adrian. Each year, on the anniversary of Adrian's death, Rocky takes Paulie to his old haunts in Philadelphia.

The story says something important to those who are over the hill, but still have some fight left in them. It speaks to father and son relationships. In one scene (1:01:43 to 1:06:24), Rocky and his son have a heart to heart to talk about the desire of Rocky to fight again. His son says, "Living has not been easy. People see me but they think of you. Now with all this going, it's gonna be worse than ever." "It don't have to be." "Sure it does!" "Why? You've got a lot going on, kid." "What, my last name? That's the reason I got a decent job. That's why people deal with me in the first place. Now I start to get a little ahead, I start to get a little something for myself, and this happens. Now, I'm asking you as a favor not to go through with this. This is gone end up bad for you, and it's gonna end up bad for me." "You think I'm hurting you?" "Yeah, in a way, you are." "That's the



last thing I ever wanted to do.” “I know that’s not what you wanna do, but that’s just the way that it is. Don’t you care what people think? Doesn’t it bother you that people are making you to be a joke and that I’ll be included in that? Do you think that’s right, do you?” Rocky then says, “You ain’t gonna believe this, but you used to fit right here. I’d hold you up and say to your mother: this kid is gonna be the best kid in the world. This kid is gonna be somebody better than anybody every knew. And you grew up good and wonderful. It was great just watching, every day was like a privilege. Then the time come for you to be your own man and take on the world, and you did. But somewhere along the line, you changed. You stopped being you. You let people stick a finger in your face and tell you you’re no good. And when thing got hard, you started looking for something to blame, like a big shadow. Let me tell you something you already know. The world ain’t all sunshine and rainbows. It’s a very mean and nasty place, and I don’t care how tough you are, it will beat you to your knees and keep you there if you let it. You, me, nobody is gonna hit you as hard as life. But it ain’t about how hard you hit. It’s about how had you can get hit and keep moving forward. How much you can take and keep moving forward. That’s how winning is done! If you know what you’re worth, go and get what you’re worth. But you gotta be willing to take the hits, and not pointing fingers saying you ain’t where you wanna be because of him or her or anybody! Cowards do that, and that ain’t you! You’re better than that! “I’m always gonna love you, no matter what happens. You’re my son and you’re my blood. You’re the best thing in my life. But until you start believing in yourself, you ain’t gonna have a life. Don’t forget to visit your mother.” As Rocky sits at Adrian’s graveside, his son comes. He quit his job. He did not fit in there. “What are you gonna do? “I’m gonna spend time with you.”

## **Charlotte’s Web – 2006 Movie**

*Charlotte’s Web* is a 2006 movie starring Dakota Fanning as Fern, with Charlotte the voice of Julia Roberts. E. B. White wrote the book in 1952. The book broadens our outlook on life and makes us realize the potential that one can attain by doing good works and learning life's most important lessons.

Our story unfolds in the sylvan setting of the Zuckerman farm. The sow on the farm gives birth to 11 little piglets and, of course, there is a runt. Young Fern is quick to rescue the tiny piggy from certain death, bonding with the porcine pal she names Wilbur and treats like a cross between favorite pet and beloved baby doll. She feeds him with a baby bottle, carts him around in a doll carriage and entertains Wilbur by reading stories to him.

However, when Wilbur goes to live in the barn nearby, he learns from the rat what the future holds for all spring pigs, a fate lurking in the ominous smokehouse up the hill.

However, Wilbur also strikes up a friendship with Charlotte, the wise and wily barn spider who weaves Wilbur's fate into her web. Their bond inspires the other animals around them to come together as a family. The essence of friendship is the central theme of White's book and this delightful motion picture.

In one scene (1:11:05 to 1:12:07), Mr. Zuckerman gives his speech at the county fair. “In a time when we really don’t see many miraculous things. Or maybe we do. Maybe they are around us every day, and we just don’t know where to look. There’s no

denying that our own little Wilbur, he's part of something that's bigger than all of us. Life on that farm is just a whole lot better with him in it. He really is some pig."

In another scene (1:13:48 to 1:14:22) Wilbur does not want Charlotte to die. "There must be something I can do." "No, Wilbur," she says. "Don't you know what you've already done? You made me your friend, and, in doing so, you made a spider beautiful to everyone in that barn." Wilbur responds, "I didn't do anything, Charlotte. You did it all" Charlotte says, "No. my webs were no miracle, Wilbur. I was only describing what I saw. The miracle is you."

In another scene (1:24:46 to 1:25:10), Wilbur tells the children of Charlotte, "You have chosen a hallowed doorway in which to spin your webs. This was your mother's doorway. She was loyal, brilliant, beautiful, and she was my friend. I will treasure her memory forever. So, to you, her daughters, I pledge my friendship." The daughters all pledge their friendship.

In another scene, (1:25:55 to 1:26:56), the narrator summarizes the story. "And, in an ordinary barn, an ordinary pig, a runt no less, stood surrounded by friends, welcoming his second spring. And that spring was followed by many, many more. All because someone stopped to see the grace, and beauty, and nobility of the humblest creature. That is the miracle of friendship. It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. Charlotte was both."

## **Harsh Times – 2006 Movie**

In one scene (1:19:32 to 1:24:13) the three men and two women arrive in paradise, a beautiful lake, birds in the air, horses playing the field, and so on. "This is paradise," one says, to which the others all agree. Jim says, "Hey Mike, they are sending me to Columbia." The Feds need his help busing drug labs and drug lords. Mike says, "Why do you want to do that? I mean, what about Marta, you know?" Jim then says that he cannot marry her because in order to have the job, he cannot be married. Toussaint says that is messed up. His belief was that if the feds would not let you marry the woman you love, you should tell the Feds where to get off. Mike says, "You love her, she loves you, right? Dude, you need to move down here, marry Marta, get a good job." Toussaint says, "You love this place, man. This is what it is all about. You got a woman that loves you and a place to stay. You'd be happy here, and you know it." He agrees that paradise its appeal, but he has his career. He has one shot. Toussaint says, "You are making mistake. You should stay right here with your woman."

## **Facing the Giants – 2006 Movie**

The congregation of Sherwood Baptist church in Albany, GA., financed this movie. Alex, who also plays the central role of coach Grant Taylor, and Stephen Kendrick, the media and teaching pastors of the church, made the movie. They made the movie with volunteer actors. Most reviewers considered the movie as marketable to the Christian market. As reviewer Joe Leydon put it, they preach so heavily to the converted that they fumbled an opportunity to reach beyond faithful churchgoers. (By the way, I find it difficult to imagine how the film received a PG rating, unless you believe the movie's producers, who say the ratings board thought "Facing the Giants" used "Jesus Christ" too many times in the script.) The theme of the movie is that a failing high-school football coach finds that in order to succeed he must convince his team that there is more

to sports than fame and glory in an inspirational tale of courage on the gridiron and the power of God's word.

Grant Taylor has been coaching the team for six years, and he has yet to realize his dream of a winning season. The team's star player transfers schools. The first three games of the new season show no promise for improvement. Job insecurity only increases the financial pressures on Grant and his wife, Brooke, who barely manage to sustain a lifestyle best described as middle-class poverty. Already depressed, the coach is driven to the brink of despair by a doctor's diagnosis: In all likelihood, he will never be able to father children. Coach Taylor is faced with the prospect of either cutting his losses and admitting defeat or turning his life over to God in an attempt to test the true power of faith. After a long dark night of the soul, however, Grant finds comfort and inspiration in his Bible. He also gets a quick dose of soulful encouragement from a saintly geezer who wanders through the Shiloh Academy halls blessing the student's lockers. Renewed and revitalized, Grant announces he is rededicating himself to Christ and redirecting his players to "honor God" by playing better.

In the early scenes, the Kendrick brothers do a fine job of vividly conveying the financial and emotional stresses that might beset someone in Grant's position. However, after the coach decides to let God be his quarterback, the writers run out of things to impede his uplift.

"If we win, we praise him; if we lose, we praise him," Coach Grant Taylor (Alex Kendrick) tells his team. "I've resolved to give God everything I've got."

Indeed, the rest of "Facing the Giants" is an unbroken string of triumphs for the born-again coach. With a potent combo of Bible-based preaching and tough-love coaching, Grant inspires even his surliest players to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior -- and, while they are at it, stop fumbling so many passes. With God on their side, they score a string of victories that is nothing short of miraculous.

After prayer and reading the Bible, the coach comes up with a new game plan: Trust God. The team rebounds, thanks in part to the use of stories from the Scriptures as coaching tools. The errant field-goal kicker is told to keep the ball on the "narrow way" between the uprights. The defense is told to build a wall like Nehemiah instructed his people to do in the Hebrew Scriptures.

In one scene (55:55 to 59:12), we have an account of revival. Coach Grant Taylor receives word of a revival breaking out on campus. Mitch has brought his Bible Study class outside. Matt Prater, a formerly bitter player, stood up and accepted Christ as his Lord. He started confessing things from his life and he started asking his friends for forgiveness. Bob Duke stands up and does the same thing. Kids break up into groups. They pray for each other. They ask forgiveness for sins they have committed. A song plays in the background that has the refrain, "You never give up on me." Matt comes to coach, hugs him, and then asks the coach to take him to his dad. His dad is at work, in a meeting with another man. "Dad, I just wanted to say that I'm sorry. I'm sorry for the way I've been acting. I got right with God today and I just needed to say that from now on I'll respect your authority. Whatever you say goes." After Matt leaves the office, the other business man says to Matt's father, "For what it's worth, I'd give my right arm to hear my son say that to me."

The movie contains about as much nuance as a lightning bolt from God and is as predictable. The message in the movie was very uplifting and effective. Yet, everything

goes right for the good people. As such, it was unrealistic. Did the church intend to convey the message: "If you believe in God and live the life a good Christian lives then good things will come your way and vice versa?" In trying to be an authentic movie about a brand of Christian faith, "Facing the Giants" steers dangerously close to caricature. However, the performances are sincere.

For example, do you remember that diagnosis of infertility? Well, the Lord works in mysterious ways, right?

For another example, what role do you think David (Bailey Cave), a pint-sized football player for the Shiloh Christian High School, plays in the state championship game against a seemingly unbeatable team called the Giants? I won't spoil the ending, but let's just say the bigger they are ...

For another example, a player and his father have problems. Yet, after the son accepts Jesus as Lord, the coach brings him to his father to apologize. As one observer put it, "I would give my right arm for my son to say that to me."

Many Christians will enjoy the movie, for the movie is a sweet and sincere about Christian faith. As one Christian, I found myself in tears several times. I found many points touching.

Yet, in trying to be an authentic movie about a brand of faith, "Facing the Giants" steers dangerously close to caricature. Even with one loss in the playoffs, everything turns out too perfect. One cannot help but wonder: How much more interesting would it have been, say, if God did not answer just one prayer by Coach Taylor, at least the way coach Taylor would have wanted?

## **Superman Returns – 2006 Movie**

*Superman Returns* is a 2006 movie, starring Brandon Routh as Superman, Kate Bosworth as Lois Lane, and Kevin Spacey as Lex Luthor. Superman returns after an absence of five years to search for his home planet Krypton. His father comments that the people of the earth want to be better. That is why I am sending them only son. Nations have moved on without him. Lois Lane has a son, a fiancé, and a Pulitzer for, "Why the World doesn't Need Superman." Around 1:10:44 to 1:16:03, a scene refers to the article. Superman wonders why she wrote it. "How could you leave us like that? I moved on, and so did the world. The world does not need a Savior, and neither do I." Superman pauses for a moment. "Lois, will you come with me?" "Why?" "There is something I want to show you." She hesitates. "Please." "We can't be long." "We won't be." She reports that Clark, a guy she works with, says that he left for such a long time because it was too unbearable. She does not agree. Superman says he thinks Clark may be right. He takes her quietly and softly into the sky. "Listen. What do you hear?" "Nothing." He brings her to a global view, and then says, "I hear everything. You say the world does not need a Savior. Everyday I hear the world crying for one." He apologizes for leaving her. "I will take you back now." Lex Luthor has a plan to destroy billions of lives. Consequently, when he returns to Metropolis, he finds that earth still needs him.

In one scene (33:43 to 40:00), Lois Lane is in a plane carrying the shuttle. Because of some things that Lex Luthor did, the plane starts to crash. Clark Kent becomes Superman, and takes off to save the day. He gets the shuttle off into space. He

then must save the plane. Lois finally sees Superman at the wing, but the wing tears off from the plane. She has fear and doubt that Superman can save them.

In another scene (1:57:56 to 2:04:04), Superman doubts that he can survive the attack by Lex Luthor. As Superman sinks into the ocean, he struggles to come to the surface. Lois, her son, and her boyfriend, flying in a plane overhead, spot him. Superman struggles, but continues to sink. He has given up. However, Lois dives in and saves Superman. The boyfriend struggles to fly the plane into the open air. Lois removes the piece of kryptonite that Lex has placed in the back of Superman. Superman leaves the plane and rises to the sun, regaining his strength. Toward the end (2:09:57 to 2:17:00), Superman falls to the earth in the form of a cross. Doctors try to save him. He still had a small piece of kryptonite in him. After his own "passion," or suffering, he is resurrected.

In another scene (2:24:0 to 2:25:35), toward the end, Lois is on the balcony. She clearly thought Superman was dead. "Will we see you around?" "I am always around. Good night, Lois." Superman appears to reassure her that he will always be near.

## Just Like Heaven – 2005 Movie

*Just Like Heaven* is a 2005 movie involving comedy, romance, and fantasy. It runs 95 minutes. It received a PG-13 rating. It made \$48.2 million in the USA. It stars Reese Witherspoon as Elizabeth and Mark Ruffalo as David. It is based on the novel *If Only It Were True* by Marc Levy.

David falls in love with Elizabeth. Only he can see her. She is not a ghost, because she is not dead, but a spirit. Why is she visible only to him? Perhaps because he has moved into her apartment. In a movie like this, there is no logical reason for such matters. They simply are, and you accept them.

Elizabeth is a young doctor at a San Francisco hospital. She is still single in her late 20s, and pulls 26-hour shifts in the emergency room. A friend despairs of her unmarried status and wants to fix her up. "I'm perfectly capable of meeting men on my own," she says. The friend: "I know you are. I just want you to meet one that's not bleeding."

David was a landscape gardener until two years ago, when his first wife Laura died suddenly. Now he drinks too much, and pays a lot of attention to the sofa he is sitting on at the moment. He is astonished when Elizabeth suddenly appears in the apartment, and orders him to stop making a mess of things.

Although a good long talk would clear up everything at any point during the movie, the talk is postponed because the movie must move toward happiness with agonizing reluctance. David, manifestly confronted with a supernatural presence, consults Darryl, the clerk in a psychic bookstore. He brings in a priest for a painfully overacted exorcism. He employs Asian ghostbusters. Elizabeth taunts him about "Father Flanagan and the Joy Luck Club." She lacks crucial knowledge about what has happened to her.

Eventually, they find that her body is in a coma in the hospital. In accordance with her living will, she will soon be taken off life support. Elizabeth's spirit and David, who have fallen in love, manage to prevent this just in time, and she miraculously recovers. However, she does not remember anything that happened during the coma or any of the events with David, which leaves him heartbroken. One day, Elizabeth goes up

to her roof and sees David, who got in with the spare key and is finishing up the garden there. Just as he is about to leave, she asks for her key back. When their hands touch, her memory is restored, and they kiss.

We meet her sister, her nieces, her co-workers, and the creepy doctor who took over her job when she became a spirit. Can Elizabeth and David, who are now in love, take steps to return her to a corporal existence that will make their relationship immeasurably more satisfactory? Can David's best buddy Jack help him with a little body-snatching? Can one movie support these many coincidences and close calls and misunderstandings?

Yes. The movie works, and so we accept everything, even the preposterous scene where a man is unconscious on the floor and Elizabeth tells David the man's lung is leaking air into his chest cavity, or whatever, and he must open a hole with a paring knife and keep it open with the plastic pour spout of a vodka bottle.

The dialogue has some wonderful moments. It turns out that Elizabeth's little niece can also see her: "My fate is in the hands of a 4-year-old, who has seven other imaginary friends." In another dialogue, she finally persuaded David to take her case: "You have two realities to choose from. The first is that a woman has come into your life in an very unconventional way and she needs your assistance. The second is that you're a crazy person, talking to himself on a park bench."

In the end, David and Elizabeth discover that they both had unfinished business – with each other. On the night of the accident, he did not show up for the blind date with Elizabeth, and she had her coma producing accident. The movie invites us to reflect upon human finitude, the prospect of death, and what one values in life. David had allowed the death of his wife to give his life death-like qualities. Elizabeth had devoted her life so much to work that she had no room for loving relationships. Both people find that bringing the prospect of our death into the consideration of the way live life will bring meaningful changes. In our own way, reflection upon our death may lead us to reflect upon our own unfinished business with the work we have to do and the relationships we need to treasure.

## **In Her Shoes – 2005 Movie**

*In Her Shoes* is a 2005 movie involving both comedy and drama. It runs 129 minutes. It stars Cameron Diaz, Toni Collette, Ken Howard, Candice Azzara, and Shirley MacLaine (nominated for best supporting actress for Golden Globe). It made \$32.8 million in the USA. It won top ten film of the year from the Phoenix Film Critics Assoc.

Maggie Feller is a blond bimbo who gets drunk at her high school reunion, has sex in the toilet and passes out. Her sister Rose is a plain-Jane Philadelphia lawyer who is 15 pounds on the wrong side of her Weight Watchers target goal. Maggie and Rose are both best friends and polar opposites when it comes to values, goals and personal styles. Their mother is dead, and their father Michael lives with his new wife Sydelle. Maggie still lives at home, because the rent is free, but Sydelle kicks her out because she wants her room for her own daughter, invariably described as "my Marsha." Maggie moves in with Rose. Some measure of her desperation is suggested when Rose tells her she might consider going back to school. Maggie: "You know how well that worked out." Rose: "I meant the literacy place." Maggie indeed flunks an MTV audition when she can't read the

words on the Teleprompter. Meanwhile, she trashes Rose's apartment while stealing her clothes, her money and a potential boyfriend. Rose throws her out.

Maggie is desperate when she finds birthday cards mailed to the girls by a grandmother whose existence was concealed from them. This is Ella and in desperation, Rose travels to Ella's retirement home in Florida and throws herself on the mercy of a total stranger. It is around here that the movie slips out of the cute stuff, and develops a bite. Ella is a no-nonsense older woman. She is a tough cookie. In one scene (59:41 to 1:01:49), she observes Maggie stealing from her and asks her, "How much money were you hoping to get from me?" Maggie says she wanted \$3,000 for acting school in New York. She makes Maggie a deal: She will match, penny for penny, whatever Maggie can make while working at the retirement home's assisted living center. Maggie says, "You would do that? Why?" "Because I am your grandmother." As Maggie begins to bond with people like Mrs. Lefkowitz and Prof, she discovers, slowly and uncertainly, that she can be competent, responsible, and maybe even respectable.

The movie's key scenes take place with Maggie among the old people. The Professor, who taught college English, is especially important to Maggie. He wants her to read to him, gently helps her understand the technique and purpose of reading and guides her through possible dyslexia. He needs a reader because he is blind, and that is important, too, because Maggie has maybe been thinking a lot about what Rose told her: "You're not going to look like this forever, you know." She knows the Professor does not like her for her looks. In one scene (1:15:00 to 1:17:07), he says to her, "Since you are not going to marry my grandson, you might as well read to me." "I'm kind of a slow reader." "Perfect, I am a slow listener." She reads him "One Art," a poem by Elizabeth Bishop that is about "the art of losing."

The art of losing isn't hard to master;  
so many things seem filled with the intent  
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster  
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:  
places, and names, and where it was you meant  
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or  
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,  
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.  
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

--Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture  
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident  
the art of losing's not too hard to master  
though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

As a woman who has made a life style out of misplacing people, possessions and responsibilities, Maggie finds it strangely comforting, and does some off-screen reading on her own. The scene sets up a powerful appearance later in the film of the e.e. cummings poem.

i carry your heart with me by E. E. Cummings

i carry your heart with me(i carry it in  
my heart)i am never without it(anywhere  
i go you go,my dear; and whatever is done  
by only me is your doing, my darling)  
i fear  
no fate(for you are my fate, my sweet) i want  
no world(for beautiful you are my world, my true)  
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant  
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows  
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud  
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows  
higher than the soul can hope or mind can hide)  
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart(i carry it in my heart)

There are various male characters in the movie, attached to various possibilities of hearts being, or not being, carried in other hearts. Nevertheless, the movie is really about the transformation of the women, of all three women. That is what is surprising: This is not simply about Ella and Rose working on Maggie, but about how her growth nudges both of the other women into new directions.

Roger Ebert points out that this movie by Curtis Hanson comes after "L.A. Confidential" (1997), "Wonder Boys" (2000) and "8 Mile" (2002) with Eminem. Three completely different movies, one would think, and yet all bound by a common thread, the transformative power of the written word. The first is about gossip journalism, the second about writers on a campus, the third about a hip-hop poet. Now a life is changed by reading.

## **Walking Across Egypt – 2005 Movie**

*Walking Across Egypt* is a 2005 movie, in which a widow takes in a teenaged boy from a juvenile detention camp against the wishes of her grown children. The basis of the



story is a novel by Clyde Edgerton. It stars Ellen Burstyn (Mattie) and Jonathan Taylor Thomas (Wesley). Mark Hamill and Judge Reinhold also star. The movie is an uplifting story of devotion and second chances.

No, the movie is not about anyone literally walking across Egypt. The movie starts with a funny old Texas granny, a stray dog, a rocking chair and a dogcatcher. The granny, Mattie, finds out that the dogcatcher has a nephew in the rehabilitation center for young men. Mattie has buried herself in her local church and spoiled grown children. However, when the pastor reads from Matthew 25, a passage that speaks of “the least of these” and visiting those in prison is also visiting Jesus, she decides to visit Wesley. She goes to visit him because she feels it is what God would want her to do. When she visits Wesley, she decides that he did not look much like Jesus.

A few months later, the boy, Wesley, turns up on her doorstep and asks to stay a few nights because he got out on leave for good behavior. Mattie hesitates at first but soon agrees happily as long as he does chores around the house. During his stay, Wesley spends most of his time having baths. He is very excited to be able to have access to one because he has never had one before. The most violent scene is when Mattie finds a gun in Wesley's bag and runs into the bathroom slips over and it accidentally goes off. Wesley, scared to death, ducks under the bubbles that are overflowing onto the floor.

Another scene (1:01:23 to 1:08:46) is when Mattie wants to take Wesley fishing but he says, "I think I'll just take a bath" and Mattie says "but you just had a bath!" and he says "Yeh, but I'm real stinky again" and Mattie says, "No one gets stinky that fast". It turns out Wesley is scared of the water because he cannot swim so Mattie pushes him in and he quickly learns. She takes Wesley in the boat to a favorite place. She likes to sit perfectly still, as if time pauses. She talks about death. She hopes that when death comes, she will be able to wait for that still moment. After fishing, Wesley thoughtlessly starts the engine while Mattie is still standing. She flies out of the boat and Wesley cries "\*\*\*\*\*!! I killed her!!" However, she pops up and Wesley reaches out his hand saying, "Here, I'll pull you up." But Mattie replies "I'm in now!! Might as well stay in!!" Wesley just about jumps on top of her. and the next scene is "another bath!!"

In a final scene (1:33:55 to 1:35:27), Wesley sits on the steps crying. He is the afraid the other boys will beat him. As he looks at the setting sun, he is waiting for that still moment, before he dies. Then, Mattie appears, ready to bring him to her home.

## **Kingdom of Heaven – 2005 Movie**

The unholy aspect of the city comes in for some treatment in a movie from the Spring of 2005, *Kingdom of Heaven*, as it offers a reasonably historical account of what occurred in the 12<sup>th</sup> century crusades. This Ridley Scott film is about a young peasant blacksmith who becomes an honored knight, saves a kingdom, and falls in love with a princess. It is also about the Crusades. Involvement in the crusades (1096-1291, eight of them) was considered a ticket to heaven. In the movie, one preacher says to the knights leaving Jerusalem that to kill an infidel is not murder, but the path to heaven. In contrast, the character of Liam Neeson says that they can hope for a kingdom of heaven, a kingdom of conscience, in which Christian and Muslim will live together in peace. At one point, the people in Jerusalem hang the Knights Templar for killing Arabs. One says, “They die for what the Pope commanded them to do.” Another says, “Not Christ, I think, or this king.”

The Templar Order, disbanded in 1312, wanted war with the Muslim Saladin: “God wills it,” they shouted. In the battle in which Saladin beat the Crusaders, he beheaded the Crusader leader and dragged it through the streets. Such beheadings were not new. Mohammed himself led armies in war, at one point ordering the massacre of Quarayza Jews by digging trenches and beheading these Jewish people. At the end of the movie, standing among the bodies of hundreds of people, the Orlando Bloom character says to Saladin, the Muslim leader, “What is Jerusalem worth?” Saladin responds, “Nothing ... and Everything.” About 900 years later, peace is still elusive for this city.

The movie offers a look at what might have happened between the Second and Third crusades. Orlando Bloom plays the heroic peasant who becomes a knight and saves a kingdom, and at the heart of the film is the pure, severe code of the knight. “The knight was the cowboy of that era,” says director Ridley Scott. “He carried with him degrees of fairness, faith and chivalry — right action. I think right action is what it is really all about.” Yes, but whose action was right in the age of the Crusades? Was right action that of the Knights Templar, the warrior monks who wanted Jerusalem for the Christians? Was right action that of Saladin, the Turk and Muslim leader who conquered Jerusalem in 1187? Was there anything right about the behavior of these three religious, if not political, entities — Islam, Judaism, Christianity — during the crusading era of the 11th-13th centuries?

## **Mother Teresa: In the Name of God's Poor – 2005 Movie**

*Mother Teresa: In the Name of God's Poor* is a 2005 movie. It stars Geraldine Chaplin. The movie is a biopic on the famous nun.

In one scene (1:29:34 to 1:31:00), in 1979, she delivers a speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize. “I accept this award for the glory of God and in the name of the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the lepers, and the blind. In the name of all those unwanted, unloved, uncared for, and humiliated, in their name, I accept this award. Because it will bring an understanding love between the rich and the poor. Because all of us here are proclaiming to the poor that we love them, that they too have been created by the loving hand of God, to love and to be loved. If we turn our back on the poor, we are turning our back on the poor, and at the hour of our death we shall be judged by what we have done for and to the poor. God bless you.

## **The Incredibles**

*The Incredibles* is a 2004 movie. It runs 115 minutes. It received a PG rating. The movie is a computer-animated feature film produced by Pixar Animation Studios for Walt Disney Pictures, centering around a family of superheroes. It was released in a two-disc DVD in the U.S. on March 15, 2005. It made \$631.4 million in the theaters. According to the Internet Movie Database, it was the highest-selling DVD of 2005, with 17.18 million copies sold. The film won the Academy Award in 2004 for Best Animated Feature (the second out of three Pixar Animation Studios feature films to do so) as well as Best Achievement in Sound Editing. It also received nominations for Best Original Screenplay (for writer/director Brad Bird) and Best Achievement in Sound, but did not win. The film was awarded the 2005 Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form.

The story follows the universal fondness for finding the chinks in superhero armor; if Superman had not had kryptonite, he would have been perfect, and therefore boring, and all the superheroes since him have spent most of their time compensating for weaknesses. Think about it: Every story begins with a superhero who is invincible, but who soon faces total defeat.

After a man's suicide attempt is foiled by the superhero Mr. Incredible (Craig T. Nelson), and an improvised train rescue - again by Incredible - leaves 100 people injured, a series of lawsuits has forced superheroes, commonly called "supers," into a government-sponsored program similar to witness protection in exchange for a promise to stop all superhero work.

Fifteen years later, two superheroes, Mr. Incredible and Elastigirl (Holly Hunter) have married and settled into relatively normal lives. Now known as Bob and Helen Parr, they have a house in the suburbs of Metroville and are raising three kids, Violet (Sarah Vowell), Dashiell ("Dash") (Spencer Fox) and baby Jack-Jack (Eli Fucile). Violet and Dash each have superpowers like their parents; Violet has the power of invisibility and the ability to throw out force fields, while Dash has super speed. Jack-Jack appears to be a normal baby without powers. Bob dreams of returning to his glory days of being a superhero, going so far as to moonlight as a crimefighter by listening to a police scanner with his friend Lucius - another former super called Frozone (Samuel L. Jackson). Helen eventually learns of his "night job" and scolds him for being reckless. Bob ultimately loses his job as a claims adjuster for an insurance agency after, enraged after being prevented from trying to help someone in trouble and his company's general business policy, he injures his boss, Mr. Huph (Wallace Shawn).

Returning home that night, Bob finds a special electronic message from a woman named Mirage (Elizabeth Peña) in his briefcase addressing him as Mr. Incredible. It asked him to subdue a renegade robot, the Omnidroid 8000, on Nomanisan, an uncharted volcanic island (a pun on the famous quote "no man is an island" by John Donne), a task he is promised to be paid handsomely for. He completes the task, telling Helen and his family that he is going on a business trip, though his old super suit is damaged in the battle. He turns to the suit's designer, the flamboyant Edna Mode (Brad Bird), for repair. Instead, she insists on creating a brand-new suit with one caveat — "No capes!" — as they have led to the demise of many past superheroes. Over the next two months, Bob maintains the image of still being employed, but secretly works out in preparation of the next assignment. However, Helen has doubts and starts to suspect Bob of having an affair.

After being contacted again by Mirage, Bob travels again to Nomanisan, but finds out it is a trap for him, as a new improved version of the Omnidroid overpowers him. He meets Syndrome (Jason Lee), once a young fan named Buddy Pine. Buddy once wanted to be Mr. Incredible's sidekick, but was harshly rejected. Now, Syndrome, through a fortune made in weapons technology, controls the entire island and the Omnidroid, and seeks to kill Mr. Incredible. Bob manages to escape and dupe Syndrome into thinking he had been killed, and then learns of Syndrome's plan to create increasingly better versions of the Omnidroid by learning from previous battles with defeated superheroes.

Simultaneously, Helen, on a hunch of Bob having an affair, visits Edna, and learns that she had not only made a new suit for Bob, but suits for the rest of the family as

well, including a homing tracker for each. Activating it, she learns that Bob is on Nomanisan, but unfortunately for Bob, this signal triggers an alarm and he is captured.

Helen calls in a favor to get a private jet to the island, but finds that Dash and Violet have snuck aboard, eager to try out their supersuits.

In one scene (1:08:16 to 1:11:09 and 1:12:12 to 1:13:37), missiles start moving toward the jet. She has to try avoiding them but it does not work. She must use her elasticity to help them survive. She first becomes a parachute. Then she becomes a speed boat to get to the island. In a humorous scene, she tells the kids to not panic, and then they all panic when the jet lands in the water. She concludes by saying that she expects them to trust her. Much to Bob's fear, Helen and the children are able to safely make it to the island. While Helen infiltrates the volcano base, Dash and Violet just barely avoid being burnt up by exhaust from the rocket that Syndrome launches, which brings the ultimate Omnidroid on target to Metroville. The children are discovered but manage to lose their attackers, while Helen rescues Bob and escapes the base; eventually, they all are able to regroup, but are shortly recaptured by Syndrome. Syndrome then explains his plan: to save Metroville from his own Omnidroid and thereby become a hero. Syndrome leaves the family trapped at the base as he departs for Metroville.

The family is able to free themselves from capture, and with Mirage's new-found help, find a second rocket which they use to get back to Metroville quickly. The Omnidroid starts to wreak havoc on the city, and Syndrome attempts his plan, but quickly loses control of the robot and is knocked unconscious. The family finally arrives and, with the help of Frozone, are able to use Syndrome's control piece for the Omnidroid to destroy it and save the city.

The family is welcomed as heroes as they are taken back home, but find that Syndrome has Jack-Jack, and attempts to kidnap him to a waiting jet. However, Jack-Jack's multiple powers are finally revealed, causing Syndrome to drop him, safely caught by Helen. Syndrome attempts to make his escape, but his cape gets caught in turbine engine and he is sucked into the fan, causing the jet to blow up and rain wreckage on the Parrs and their home, destroying it. Violet creates a force field around the family just in time to protect them from the falling debris.

Three months later, the Parrs are much happier; Bob is now content with their civilian life, Dash controls the use of his powers in track events, and Violet, having found confidence, is asked by her heartthrob Tony Rydinger (Michael Bird) to a date. However, a new villain, The Underminer (John Ratzenberger), rises from the ground and declares "war on peace and happiness." The movie ends as the family members, including Jack-Jack, put on their masks and prepare to fight.

On the surface, "The Incredibles" is a goof on superhero comics. Underneath, it's a critique of modern American uniformity. Mr. Incredible is forced to retire, not because of age or obsolescence, but because of trial lawyers seeking damages for his unsolicited good deeds; he's in the same position as the Boy Scout who helps the little old lady across the street when she doesn't want to go. What his society needs is not superdeeds but tort reform. "They keep finding new ways," he sighs, "to celebrate mediocrity."

## **What the Bleep Do We Know? – 2004 Documentary**

What the Bleep Do We Know - 2004 Documentary

*What the Bleep Do We Know* is a 2004 documentary. Filmed in Portland, Oregon, *What the Bleep Do We Know* blends a fictional story line, documentary-style discussion, and computer animation to present a viewpoint of the physical universe and human life within it, with connections to neuroscience and quantum physics. Some ideas discussed in the film are:

The universe is best seen as constructed from thought (or ideas) rather than from substance.

"Empty space" is not empty.

Beliefs about who one is and what is real form oneself and one's realities.

Peptides manufactured in the brain can cause a bodily reaction to an emotion.

In the narrative segments of the movie, Marlee Matlin portrays Amanda, a deaf photographer who acts as the viewer's avatar as she experiences her life from startlingly new and different perspectives.

In the documentary segments of the film, interviewees discuss the roots and meaning of Amanda's experiences. The comments focus primarily on a single theme: We create our own reality. The director, William Arntz, has described *What the Bleep* as a movie for the "metaphysical left".

According to *Publishers Weekly*, the movie was one of the sleeper hits of 2004, as "word-of-mouth and strategic marketing kept it in theaters for an entire year." The article states that the gross exceeded \$10 million, which is referred to as not bad for a low-budget documentary, and that the DVD release attained even more significant success with over a million units shipped in the first six months following its release in March 2005.

Fred Alan Wolf says, "I have no idea what God is. Yet, I have an experience of what God is. There is something very real about this presence called God, although I have no idea how to define God, to see God as a person or a thing. It's kind of like asking a human being to explain what God is similar to asking a fish to explain the water in which the fish swims." Toward the beginning, he says, "What I thought was unreal, now for me ... seems in some ways to be more real than what I think to be real ... which seems now more to be unreal. ... Ponder that for a while."

In the *Publishers Weekly* article, publicist Linda Rienecker of New Page Books says that she sees the film's success as part of a wider phenomenon, stating, "A large part of the population is seeking spiritual connections, and they have the whole world to choose from now". Author Barrie Dolnick adds that "people don't want to learn how to do one thing. They'll take a little bit of Buddhism, a little bit of veganism, a little bit of astrology... They're coming into the marketplace hungry for direction, but they don't want some person who claims to have all the answers. They want suggestions, not formulas." The same article quotes Bill Pfau, Advertising Manager of Inner Traditions, as saying "More and more ideas from the New Age community have become accepted into the mainstream."

Film critics offered mixed reviews as seen on the movie review website Rotten Tomatoes. In his review of the movie, Dave Kehr of the *New York Times* described the "transition from quantum mechanics to cognitive therapy" as "plausible", but stated also that "the subsequent leap—from cognitive therapy into large, hazy spiritual beliefs—isn't

as effectively executed. Suddenly people who were talking about subatomic particles are alluding to alternate universes and cosmic forces, all of which can be harnessed in the interest of making Ms. Matlin's character feel better about her thighs.

What the Bleep Do We Know!? has been described as "a kind of New Age answer to 'The Passion of the Christ' and other films that adhere to traditional religious teachings." It offers alternative spirituality views characteristic of New Age philosophy, including critiques of traditional religion's moral values.

Scientists who have reviewed What the Bleep Do We Know!? have described distinct assertions made in the film as pseudoscience. Amongst the concepts in the film that have been challenged are assertions that water molecules can be influenced by thought, that meditation can reduce violent crime rates, and that quantum physics implies that "consciousness is the ground of all being."

The film was also discussed in a letter published in Physics Today that challenges how physics is taught, saying teaching fails to "expose the mysteries physics has encountered [and] reveal the limits of our understanding." In the letter, the authors write "the movie illustrates the uncertainty principle with a bouncing basketball being in several places at once. There's nothing wrong with that. It's recognized as pedagogical exaggeration. But the movie gradually moves to quantum 'insights' that lead a woman to toss away her antidepressant medication, to the quantum channeling of Ramtha, the 35,000-year-old Atlantis god, and on to even greater nonsense." It went on to say that "most laypeople cannot tell where the quantum physics ends and the quantum nonsense begins, and many are susceptible to being misguided," a situation which the authors attribute to how in the current teaching of quantum mechanics "we tacitly deny the mysteries physics has encountered."

Richard Dawkins, author of "The God Delusion" stated that "the authors seem undecided whether their theme is quantum theory or consciousness. Both are indeed mysterious, and their genuine mystery needs none of the hype with which this film relentlessly and noisily belabours us", concluding that the film is "tosh". Professor Clive Greated wrote that "thinking on neurology and addiction are covered in some detail but, unfortunately, early references in the film to quantum physics are not followed through, leading to a confused message". Despite his caveats, he recommends that people see the movie, stating, "I hope it develops into a cult movie in the UK as it has in the US. Science and engineering are important for our future, and anything that engages the public can only be a good thing." Simon Singh called it pseudoscience and said the suggestion "that if observing water changes its molecular structure, and if we are 90% water, then by observing ourselves we can change at a fundamental level via the laws of quantum physics" was "ridiculous balderdash." According to João Magueijo, reader in theoretical physics at Imperial College, the film deliberately misquotes science. The American Chemical Society's review criticizes the film as a "pseudoscientific docudrama", saying "Among the more outlandish assertions are that people can travel backward in time, and that matter is actually thought."

The film's central theme -- that quantum mechanics suggests that a conscious observer can affect physical reality -- has also been refuted by Bernie Hobbs, a science writer with ABC Science Online. Hobbs explains, "The observer effect of quantum physics isn't about people or reality. It comes from the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, and it's about the limitations of trying to measure the position and momentum of

subatomic particles... this only applies to sub-atomic particles - a rock doesn't need you to bump into it to exist. It's there. The sub-atomic particles that make up the atoms that make up the rock are there too." Hobbs also discusses Hagelin's experiment with Transcendental Meditation and the Washington DC rate of violent crime, saying that "the number of murders actually went up." Hobbs also disputed the film's use of the ten percent myth.

David Albert, a physicist who appears in the film, has accused the filmmakers of selectively editing his interview to make it appear that he endorses the film's thesis that quantum mechanics are linked with consciousness. He says he is "profoundly unsympathetic to attempts at linking quantum mechanics with consciousness."

In the film, during a discussion of the influence of experience on perception, Candice Pert notes a story, which she says she believes is true, of Native Americans being unable to see Columbus's ships because they were outside their experience. According to an article in *Fortean Times* by David Hambling, the origins of this story likely involved the voyages of Captain James Cook, not Columbus, and an account related by historian Robert Hughes which said Cook's ships were "...complex and unfamiliar as to defy the natives' understanding". Hambling says it is likely that both the Hughes account and the story told by Pert were exaggerations of the records left by Captain Cook and the botanist Joseph Banks. Historians believe the Native Americans likely saw the ships but ignored them as posing no immediate danger.

## **Beyond the Sea – 2004 Movie**

*Beyond the Sea* is a 2004 movie. It lasts 118 min. It received a PG-13 rating. It stars Kevin Spacey as Bobby Darin. Bob Hoskins and John Goodman also star. It made a little over \$6.1 million.

Kevin Spacey constructs the picture as a film within a film, to provide an explanation for the spectacle of an older man playing a much younger one. The film begins with Darin onstage at the Copacabana nightclub, and then pulls back to reveal that we are on a sound stage; the adult Darin is confronted by himself as a young boy, arguing that he's gotten it all wrong, and in a weird way the whole movie will be an argument among the various ages of Bobby Darin.

Darin as a boy is the darling of his mother and sister Nina, although his relationship with them is not quite what he believes. Nina's husband, Charlie, helps start his career, a manager signs aboard and, with big teeny-bopper hits like "Splish Splash," he becomes a star.

Darin hungers to grow, and moves into the mainstream of popular music with hits like "Mack the Knife" and "Beyond the Sea." On a movie set, he falls in love with Sandra Dee and marries her, at a time when their careers were both soaring. The marriage goes wrong for reasons that seem to have more to do with biopic conventions than real life; their careers keep them apart, etc., although there is a moment with the hard truth of "A Star Is Born" when Darin is nominated for an Oscar, loses, goes ballistic and screams: "Warren Beatty is there with Leslie Caron and I'm there with Gidget!"

Darin's career collapse led at one point to exile in a house trailer, and then to a comeback in which he tried to cross over into politically-conscious acoustic folk singing, which was not a good fit for his talent. ("Sing 'Dream Lover!'" the jerks in the audience

shouted. "Sing 'Splish Splash!'") His Vegas debut flops, but he returns in triumph after re-staging his show to include a black gospel choir, which brings a lot of energy onto the stage. He is advised of audiences, "Remember -- they hear what they see," and he nods at this wise insight, although I am not sure exactly what it means.

Bobby Darin's life provides a less-than-perfect template for a biopic because he achieved success up to a certain point, then failed, then did not really have much of a comeback, then died young. Not precisely the inspirational ascent of a biographical Everest. But the movie possesses genuine feeling because Spacey is there with Darin during all the steps of this journey, up and down, all the way into death. Not all stories have successful conclusions. Not all lives have third acts. This was a life, too, and although it was a disappointment, it also contained more success and maybe even more happiness than Darin could have reasonably expected at age 15, his presumed cut-off date.

What most of us as watchers of this movie will sense that in "Beyond the Sea" Spacey has sympathy with and for Bobby Darin.

Bobby Darin (born Walden Robert "Bobby" Cassotto, May 14, 1936 – December 20, 1973) was one of the most popular American big band performers and rock and roll teen idols of the late 1950s. He allegedly chose Darin because he had seen a malfunctioning electrical sign at a Chinese restaurant reading "DARIN DUCK" rather than "MANDARIN DUCK," and he thought the Darin looked good. Later, he said that the name was randomly picked out of the telephone book. Neither story has been verified.

Darin receives wide respect for being a multi-talented, versatile performer who conquered many music genres, including folk, country, pop, and jazz.

He was also an award-winning actor, songwriter and music business entrepreneur. His wish for a legacy was "to be remembered as a human being and as a great performer." Among his many other contributions, he became a Goodwill Ambassador for the American Heart Association.

Darin was introduced to then up and coming singer Connie Francis. Bobby's manager arranged for Darin to help write several songs for Connie in order to help jump-start her singing career. Initially the two artists could not see eye to eye on potential material but after several weeks, Bobby and Connie developed a romantic interest in one another. Unfortunately, Connie had a very strict Italian father who would separate the couple whenever possible. When Connie's father learned that Bobby had suggested the two lovers elope after one of Connie's shows, he ran Darin out of the building while waving a gun telling Bobby to never see his daughter again. Bobby saw Connie only two more times after this happened, once when the two were scheduled to sing together for a television show and again later when Connie was spotlighted on the tv series This Is Your Life. To date Connie has said that not marrying Bobby was the biggest mistake of her life.

Darin left Decca to sign with Atlantic Records (ATCO), where he wrote and arranged music for himself and others. There, after three mediocre recordings, his career took off in 1958 when he wrote and recorded "Splish Splash"; it became an instant hit, selling more than a million copies. "Splish Splash" was written with Radio DJ Murray Murray the K Kaufman, who bet that Darin could not write a song that started out with the words, "Splish Splash, I was takin' a bath", as suggested by Murray's mother. On a snow bound night in early 1958, Darin went in the studio alone and recorded a demo of



"Splish Splash". They eventually shared writing credits with her. This was followed by more hits recorded in the same successful style.

In 1959, Bobby Darin recorded "Dream Lover", a ballad that became a multi-million seller. With financial success came the ability to demand more so-called creative control. His next record, "Mack the Knife", was the classic standard from Kurt Weill's Threepenny Opera. Darin gave the tune a vamping jazz-pop interpretation, which he consciously modeled on the style of Frankie Laine. The song went to #1 on the charts for nine weeks, sold over a million copies and won the Grammy Award for Record of the Year in 1960. Darin was also voted the Grammy Award for Best New Artist that year. "Mack The Knife" has since been honored with a Grammy Hall of Fame Award. He followed "Mack" with "Beyond the Sea", a jazzy English-language version of Charles Trenet's French hit song, "La Mer."

Propelled by the success of "Mack the Knife" and "Beyond the Sea," Darin became a hot commodity. He set all-time attendance records at the famed Copacabana nightclub in NYC, where it was not unusual for fans to line up all the way around the block to get tickets when Darin was playing there. The Copacabana sold so many seats to Darin's shows that they had to fill the dance floor, normally part of the performance area, with extra seating. Darin also headlined at the major casinos in Las Vegas.

Darin was instrumental in bringing up new talent. Richard Pryor, Flip Wilson, and Wayne Newton opened his night club performances when they were virtually unknown. Early on, at the Copacabana, he insisted that black comic Nipsey Russell be his opening act. His request was grudgingly granted by Jules Podell, the Frank Costello (mob boss) manager of the Copacabana.

In the 1960s, Darin also owned and operated a highly successful music publishing and production company (TM Music/Trio) and signed Wayne Newton to TM, giving him a song that was originally sent to Darin to record. That record went on to become Newton's breakout hit, "Danke Schoen". He also was a mentor to Roger McGuinn, who worked for Darin at TM Music before going off to form The Byrds. Darin also produced football great Rosey Grier's 1964 LP, *Soul City*, and "Made in the Shade" for Jimmy Boyd.

In 1962, Darin also began to write and sing country music, with songs including "Things" (1962), "You're the Reason" and "18 Yellow Roses".

In addition to music, Darin became a motion picture actor. In 1960, he was the only actor ever to be contractually signed to five major Hollywood film studios. He wrote music for several films and acted in them as well. In his first major film, *Come September*, a romantic comedy designed to capitalize on his popularity with the teenage and young adult audience, he met and co-starred with 18-year-old actress Sandra Dee. They fell in love and were married in 1960. They had one son, Dodd Mitchell Darin, in 1961, and divorced in 1967.

Asking to be taken seriously, he took on more meaningful movie roles, and in 1962, he won the Golden Globe Award for "Most Promising Male Newcomer" for his role in *Pressure Point*.

In 1963, he was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his role as a shell-shocked soldier in *Captain Newman, M.D.*. At the Cannes Film Festival, where his records—in particular "Beyond the Sea"—brought him a wide following, he won the French Film Critics Award for Best Actor.

Darin had been penciled in to star opposite Jackie Gleason in *The Hustler*, before Paul Newman's schedule suddenly allowed first choice Newman to step in.

Darin's musical output became more "folky" as the 1960s progressed and he became more politically aware and active. In 1966, he had another big hit record, but this time it was with folksinger Tim Hardin's "If I Were a Carpenter", adding another style to his vast repertoire. The song secured Darin's return to the Top 10 after a four-year absence. Jim McGuinn the future leader of the Byrds was part of his performing band. He traveled with Robert Kennedy on the latter's presidential campaign, and was with Kennedy the night before Kennedy traveled to Los Angeles in 1968 and was assassinated. Darin was devastated with this news. Coming back, in 1969, he started another record company, Direction Records, putting out folk and protest music. He said of his first Direction Records album, "The purpose of Direction Records is to seek out statement-makers. The album is solely comprised of compositions designed to reflect my thoughts on the turbulent aspects of modern society." During this time, he was billed under the name "Bob Darin," grew a mustache, and stopped wearing a hairpiece. Within two years, however, all of these changes were discontinued.

At the beginning of the 1970s, he continued to act and to record, including several albums with Motown Records and a couple of films. In January 1971, he underwent his first heart surgery in an attempt to correct some of the heart damage he had lived with since childhood.

Darin married Andrea Yeager in June of 1973. In 1972, he starred in his own TV variety show on NBC, *The Bobby Darin Amusement Company*, which ran until his untimely death in 1973. He made TV guest appearances and also remained a top draw at Las Vegas, where due to his poor health, he was often administered oxygen after his performances.

Somewhere beyond the sea  
somewhere waiting for me  
my lover stands on golden sands  
and watches the ships that go sailin

Somewhere beyond the sea  
she's there watching for me  
If I could fly like birds on high  
then straight to her arms  
I'd go sailin'

It's far beyond the stars  
it's near beyond the moon  
I know beyond a doubt  
my heart will lead me there soon

We'll meet beyond the shore  
we'll kiss just as before  
Happy we'll be beyond the sea

and never again I'll go sailin'

I know beyond a doubt  
my heart will lead me there soon  
We'll meet (I know we'll meet) beyond the shore  
We'll kiss just as before  
Happy we'll be beyond the sea  
and never again I'll go sailin'

no more sailin'  
so long sailin'  
bye bye sailin'...  
move on out captain

Come and sing a simple song of freedom  
Sing it like you've never sung before  
Let it fill the air  
Tell the people everywhere  
We, the people here, don't want a war.

Hey, there, mister black man, can you hear me?  
I don't want your diamonds or your game  
I just want to be someone known to you as me  
And I will bet my life you want the same.

Come and sing a simple song of freedom  
Sing it like you've never sung before  
Let it fill the air  
Tell the people everywhere  
We, the people here, don't want a war.

Seven hundred million are ya list'nin'?'  
Most of what you read is made of lies  
But, speakin' one to one ain't it everybody's sun  
To wake to in the mornin' when we rise?

Come and sing a simple song of freedom  
Sing it like you've never sung before  
Let it fill the air  
Tell the people everywhere  
We, the people here, don't want a war.

Brother Solzhenitsyn, are you busy?  
If not, won't you drop this friend a line  
Tell me if the man who is plowin' up your land  
Has got the war machine upon his mind?

Come and sing a simple song of freedom  
Sing it like you've never sung before  
Let it fill the air  
Tell the people everywhere  
We, the people here, don't want a war.

Now, no doubt some folks enjoy doin' battle  
Like presidents, prime ministers and kings  
So, let's all build them shelves  
Where they can fight among themselves  
Leave the people be who love to sing.

Come and sing a simple song of freedom  
Sing it like you've never sung before  
Let it fill the air  
Tell the people everywhere  
We, the people here, don't want a war.

I say ... let it fill the air ...  
Tellin' people everywhere ...  
We, the people here, don't want a war

## **Spider-man 2 – 2004 Movie**

*Spider-man 2* is a 2004 sci-fi and comic book hero movie. It received PG-13 rating. It made over \$373 million. It stars Tobey Maguire, Kirsten Dunst, James Franco, Alfred Molina, and Rosemary Harris. It received academy nominations for best sound editing and best sound mixing, and won for best visual effects. It won best picture for AFI. With Broadcast Film Critics Association, it received a nomination for best live action family film and it won for best popular film.

Roger Ebert says that this is what a superhero movie should be. It believes in its story in the same way serious comic readers believe, when the adventures on the page express their own dreams and wishes. It is not camp and it is not nostalgia, it is not wall-to-wall special effects and it is not pickled in angst. It is simply and poignantly a realization that being Spider-Man is a burden that Peter Parker is not entirely willing to bear. It succeeds by being true to the insight that allowed Marvel Comics to upturn decades of comic-book tradition: Readers could identify more completely with heroes like themselves than with remote godlike paragons. Peter Parker was an insecure high school student, in grade trouble, inarticulate in love, unready to assume the responsibilities that came with his unexpected superpowers. It was not that Spider-Man could swing from skyscrapers that won over his readers; it was that he fretted about personal problems in the thought balloons above his Spidey facemask.

Parker is in college now, studying physics at Columbia, more helplessly in love than ever with Mary Jane Watson. He's on the edge of a breakdown: He's lost his job as a pizza deliveryman, Aunt May faces foreclosure on her mortgage, he's missing classes, the colors run together when he washes his Spider-Man suit at the Laundromat, and after his

web-spinning ability inexplicably seems to fade, he throws away his beloved uniform in despair. When a bum tries to sell the discarded Spidey suit to Jonah Jameson, editor of the Daily Bugle, Jameson offers him \$50. The bum says he could do better on eBay. Has it come to this?

The seasons in a superhero's life are charted by the villains he faces (it is the same with James Bond).

"Spider-Man 2" gives Spider-Man an enemy with a good nature that is overcome by evil. Peter Parker admires the famous Dr. Otto Octavius (Alfred Molina), whose laboratory on the banks of the East River houses an experiment that will either prove that fusion can work as a cheap source of energy, or vaporize Manhattan. To handle the dangerous materials of his experiments, Octavius devises four powerful tentacles that are fused to his spine and have a cyber-intelligence of their own. He devises a chip at the top of his spine prevents them from overriding his orders, but when the chip is destroyed, the gentle scientist is transformed into Doc Ock. He becomes a fearsome fusion of man and machine, who can climb skyscraper walls by driving his tentacles through concrete and bricks. We hear him coming, hammering his way toward us like the drums of hell.

Peter Parker, meanwhile, has vowed that he cannot allow himself to love Mary Jane, because her life would be in danger from Spider-Man's enemies. She has finally given up on Peter, who is always standing her up; she announces her engagement to no less than an astronaut. Peter has heart-to-hearts with her and with Aunt May. And he has to deal with his friend Harry Osborn, who likes Peter but hates Spider-Man, blaming him for the death of his father (a.k.a. the Green Goblin, although much is unknown to the son).

In one scene (1:22:30 to 1:25:07), Peter has given up his Spiderman powers. He wants to be normal. A little boy helps May cleaning the back yard. He wants to know why Spiderman quit. The boy wants to be Spiderman. Peter asks "Why?" May tells Peter about heroes and hero worship: "He knows a hero when he sees one. Not too many people out there will save old girls like me. And Lord knows, kids like Henry need a hero. Courageous, self-sacrificing people, setting examples for all of us. Everybody loves a hero. People line up for them. Cheer them. Scream their names. And years later, they'll tell how they stood in the rain for hours just to get a glimpse of the one who taught them to hold on a second longer. I believe there's a hero in all of us, that keeps us honest, gives us strength, makes us noble, and finally allows us to die with pride, even though sometimes we have to be steady, and give up the thing we want the most. Even our dreams. Spiderman did that for Henry and he wonders where he's gone. He needs him."

## **Spanglish – 2004 Movie**

*Spanglish* is a 2004 movie starring Adam Sandler as John Clasky the father of an Anglo family and a great chef, Tea Leoni as Deborah Clasky, and Paz Vega. The movie is a story of a Latina maid who only speaks Spanish, works for a rich family and has a daughter who learns to appreciate her mother. It tells the story of a Mexican woman and her daughter who travel all the way to Los Angeles to bring sanity to a crazy Anglo family. John loves his wife, but treacherously observes, "I'm running out of excuses for the woman of the house." He is a sweet man, and at one point, his wife asked him, "Could you stop being so stark-raving calm?" Into this household come Flor (Paz Vega) and her daughter Cristina, who is about the same middle-school age as the Clasky's daughter

Bernice. "Spanglish" is not really about being a maid, it is more about being a life force, as Flor heals this family with a sunny disposition and an anchor of normality. Roger Ebert notes that there are a couple of excursions toward adultery in the film, one off-screen, the other not quite realized, but they, too, exist not to cause trouble, but to provide trouble that can be cured.

Around 1:20 in the movie, Flor says to John, in a beautiful evening beach scene, "I never know a man who can understand me the way you can. How did you become that man?" In a comment about the barrier that language can present, John says, at the close of his conversation on the beach, "You speaking English, it's ... It's nice meeting you."

The movie is all about solutions, and the problems are more like test questions. At the end, one might feel as if we had experienced little risk in the characters, but we have seen some worthy characters stumbling toward improvement.

In one scene, (59:39 to 1:07:20) with one cuss word, Flor tries to explain to the Clasky's her opinions about family with her daughter as the translator. This scene is one of the favorites of Roger Ebert. It shows the difficulty of communication across language barriers. Flor decides she must finally explain to the Claskys exactly what she thinks, and why. At this point, she still speaks no English, and so Cristina acts as her interpreter. Mother and daughter show comic timing, the mother waving her arms and the girl waving her same arms exactly the same way a second later, as they stalk around the room, Cristina acting as translator, shadow and mime. She is angry with John giving her daughter \$640. She is angry about the interference of the Anglo family into the life of her daughter. At one point, John says she is being a hypocrite, for she also interfered into the life of his daughter. She says, "You are right." John says, "That has never happened before. I make a point, and the other concedes the point." Later in the argument, John says to Christina, "You listen to everything your mother says." Flor asks Christina what he said, and she responded, "Nothing."

Another scene is an ironic dialogue in a sequence involving the Times review of John's restaurant, which to John is a catastrophe. He explains that four-star reviews ruin restaurants: A line of @\$\$#!>s immediately forms out in front. Please, lord, he prays, just give me three and a quarter stars. The restaurant is not crucial to the story, however; it is more like a way for John to get out of the house.

In a fight between John and Deborah about the affair, she says to him, "Are you really that much nicer than me?" John responds, "You do not set the bar very high."

In one scene (1:29:21 to 1:31:26) Evelyn, the alcoholic mother of Deborah, wants time to talk. She has not taken a drink for two weeks, and no one noticed. "Deborah, you are going to lose your husband if you do not stop doing what you are doing. There will only be men who you know are cheap and shallow and have no real warmth in their souls. You may have gotten by on those surfaces once but now you have been spoiled by a good man. If you do not act quickly you will soon cement an awful fate for yourself a life with no hope of repair, which has already begun to turn desperate and dumb." The response: You've done it again, mother. You have made me hate myself, something I can always count on." The response of the mother, "Honey, lately your low self-esteem is just good common sense."

At the end of a fight between Christina and Flor, Flor finally asks, "Is what you want is to be so different from me?" At the end of the movie, we find that Christina is

now a teen, applying for college, and what we have witnessed is her essay on how she is her mother's daughter.

## **Life as a House – 2004 Movie**

*Life as a House*, a 2004 movie, Kevin Kline plays a character who receives a broken down home from his father, a home he lived in and hated. After he loses his job, he decides to tear down the home and build a new one. He wants to build it with his son, who hates him and his ex-wife. At a key moment in the movie, the father gives his son some gloves and says, "Build this house with me." His son says his father just wants to tear down the house because he wants to tear down his father. "Try it; it feels good," Kline says. As they work on the new home together, they restore their relationship. In the last days of his life, Kline helps his family learn how to hug and care for each other again.

## **Ice Age – 2004 Movie**

*Ice Age* is a 2004 animated film. An unlikely trio of animals, Diego the saber-toothed tiger, who seems to have a hidden agenda, the casual Sid the sloth and the brave Manfred the woolly mammoth, band together for survival as the ice age begins. They rescue one another. They also return a human baby to his father, even though they know the humans have developed weapons that can kill them.

In one scene (18:13 to 22:24), Sid and Manfred finds a baby boy. The mother has run from the saber-toothed tiger and jumped down a waterfall. They see the baby, but suddenly the mother disappears into the river. Manfred is ready to leave. Sid says he cannot leave, for he has saved the baby. Manfred says that he is still trying to get rid of the last thing he saved, namely, Sid. Sid says "we" need to return the baby to its herd. Manfred says, with emphasis, "There is no us." Diego tries to take the baby, but Manfred saves the baby again.

In another scene (54 to 56), Diego, the saber-toothed tiger, jumps across a chasm. He starts to fall to a certain death when Manfred grabs him and saves him. Manfred then falls, but remains alive. "Why did you do that," says Diego, "You could have died." Manfred says, "That's what you do when you are in a herd. You look out for each other." "Well, thanks." Sid says, "We are the weirdest herd I've ever seen."

At the end, when Diego redeems himself by saving Manfred, Sid, and the baby, from the trap he set with his pack, he asks forgiveness. Sid says, "You know me, Diego, I am too lazy to hold a grudge."

## **American Jesus – 2003 Book**

Stephen Prothero, writer of *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon*, 2003, is the chair of the religion department at Boston University.

Religious liberty in America has benefited greatly from the strict separation of church and state. Without a powerful government attempting to define and impose religious orthodoxy on the people, significantly more religious pluralism has developed in America than in most other places. This has allowed people to create religious groups

based upon personal experiences and divorced from historical traditions or orthodoxy. One consequence of this has been the separation of the figure of Jesus from historical Christian beliefs. How this occurred and what it has produced is the topic of Stephen Prothero's book.

Reviewer Philip Jenkins notes that Albert Schweitzer famously compared those who tried to reconstruct the Real Jesus to a man looking into a well, who sees the reflection of his own face staring up at him. In this book, Prothero catalogues the dazzling array of Jesus reflections that Americans have contemplated over the years.

Reviewer Ron Charles says Prothero describes the universalization of Jesus. Jesus has become present everywhere and a flexible celebrity.

While acknowledging the extraordinary religious diversity in the United States, Prothero reminds us that America now contains more Christians than any other nation in history. Despite periodic jeremiads about our hedonistic society, Americans are vastly more interested in Jesus than their Puritan ancestors, who were, as Prothero writes, "a God-fearing rather than Jesus-loving people." In fact, given the current situation in America where Jesus is a constant presence, it might surprise many readers to learn that at one time church attendance in the colonies was quite low and public piety relatively uncommon. Where religion did prevail, Christians were not especially concerned with Jesus. The strong Calvinist influence on American religion caused most people to focus on God the Father rather than Jesus the Son. Jesus may be the main character in the New Testament, but he was not a significant character in early American Christianity.

Times have changed. However, Prothero also points out that Jesus may rule the country, but the country rules Jesus right back. Members of every group - Protestants, Catholics, Pentecostals, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, gays, blacks, feminists, hippies, atheists, rappers - have felt either empowered or forced to define Jesus in their own image. "While Christian insiders have had the authority to dictate that others interpret Jesus, they have not had the authority to dictate how these others would do so."

Reviewer Michale Massing points to some examples. As Prothero notes, the Library of Congress has twice as many books on Jesus (about 17,000) as on the next most discussed subject (Shakespeare). Jesus has been extolled by figures as diverse as Malcolm X (who told Playboy in 1963 that "Christ was a black man"), Swami Vivekananda (who set up Hindu societies in America that embraced "Christ the Yogi") and the Yiddish writer Sholem Asch, whose 698-page fictionalized opus "The Nazarene" won international acclaim on the eve of World War II. Warner Sallman's "Head of Christ," an idealized portrait painted in 1940, became a fixture in kitchens, bedrooms and even wallets across the country, helping to hasten Jesus' journey from an abstract principle into a celebrity and, finally, an icon.

In the first part of his book, Prothero traces that remarkable dynamic from the founding of the Republic to the present day.

He begins with Thomas Jefferson's hands-on approach to the Bible. The author of the Declaration of Independence was also an aggressive editor of the New Testament. Disgusted with what he considered the miracles and dogma cluttering Jesus' wisdom, he took a razor and cut away about 90 percent of the text. On Jan. 20, 1804, Thomas Jefferson ordered from a Philadelphia bookseller two copies of the King James Version of the New Testament. An unflinching rationalist, Jefferson deeply admired Jesus the man but disdained the cloak of doctrine and mysticism in which the church had draped



him. Despite all his duties as president, Jefferson found the time to sit down in the White House with his Bibles and, over several evenings, excise with a razor all those passages that related to the virgin birth, the resurrection, the incarnation and anything else that smacked of the supernatural. Only about 1 in 10 verses survived. Jefferson cut them out and pasted them into two columns of 46 octavo sheets, the size ministers then favored. Published as "The Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth," this truncated Gospel portrayed Jesus as a wise man who spent his time wandering around Galilee, delivering parables and aphorisms. By this act, Stephen Prothero writes, Jefferson became America's first real Bible scholar, and his cut-and-paste Gospel marked the birth of an "American Jesus," a "malleable and multiform" figure whose story over the next two centuries would be constantly remolded and reimagined to fit the needs of succeeding generations.

In this bold act of selection, Prothero sees a model for all future American redefinitions of Jesus. Indeed, the president's methods and results bear an uncanny resemblance to Robert Funk's Jesus Seminar. In 1993, this strangely eclectic group produced a color-coded New Testament that represented how members voted on the reliability of each verse. Like Jefferson, they dismissed anything that sounded physically unnatural or theological.

The meat of Prothero's study lies in showing how America moved between these two similar points from 1800 and 2000. In the marketplace of ideas that America created, he argues, preachers competed for parishioners as never before: Bible stories sold better than dogma, and a personal Savior was more cuddly than a sovereign God. In particular, he points to the Baptist preachers and Methodist circuit riders of the first third of the century, raising revival tents in mountain hollows and prairie fields and jettisoning the stern doctrines of Puritanism for a subjective emotionalism rooted in the "private stirrings" of the heart. In place of the traditional Protestant rallying cry of "sola scriptura" (only Scripture), the evangelicals put forward a new slogan: "solus Jesus" -- only Jesus. Theirs was a very approachable Savior, offering solace and comfort to all who would embrace him. However, by this time, Prothero asserts, Jesus was a feminized character designed to appeal to American women who, in the Victorian era, took charge of the home and the molding of character.

After the Civil War, the task of humanizing Jesus fell to liberal Protestant ministers. Seeking a better society, they cast Jesus as "more a moralist than a miracle worker," a figure who walked the earth not to pay a debt owed to an angry Father "but to reveal to human beings the loving character of God, and to prompt them to develop the same character in themselves." As liberal Protestants accommodated modern science and social activism, they were forced to discard old creeds and much of the Scriptures, but they still had a friend in Jesus.

When that shift inspired a crisis of masculinity, Jesus bulked up in response. Billy Sunday, a retired ballplayer for the Chicago White Stockings, became the hottest preacher in the country, insisting that Jesus "was the greatest scrapper that ever lived." As sports and Hollywood created a culture of celebrity, Jesus became the world's Superstar, signifying nothing but himself robed in glory. "All you need is Jesus," we now hear from every divergent quarter.

Prothero discusses the Jesus People of the 1960's. In places like Haight-Ashbury and Hollywood, hippies and dropouts began finding in Jesus a better high than in hash or LSD. Preaching on street corners, selling buttons with slogans like "The Messiah is the

Message," inspiring rock musicals like "Jesus Christ Superstar," they sought to convert the counterculture. Today, the Jesus movement is widely seen as a 60's curio. However, as Prothero points out, its adherents, after cutting their hair, entering the workforce and having families, had a huge effect on mainstream Christianity, helping to spawn Christian retailing (now a \$4-billion-a-year business), contemporary Christian music and thriving megachurches whose dynamic pastors and family-friendly services draw baby-boomers by the thousands.

Prothero claims that through this 200-year process, creed, theology, even meaning continued to fall away or be completely revised, but Jesus gained greater and greater cultural prominence. By the 1970s, he was the Coca-Cola of divine nature, "more logo, than Logos." Prothero moves breezily through this history with an encyclopedic command of others' research and popular culture. His survey of novels about Jesus provides a particularly illuminating gauge of changing thought. Most originally, he studies portraits of Jesus, finding in this mass-produced art a graph of American attitudes about the Savior.

The second half of the book considers four cases of what Prothero calls "reincarnations": Jesus' role in Mormonism, the Black Pride movement, Judaism, and Hinduism. Thus, as a human being rather than a theological signpost, though, Jesus was no longer as tied to Christianity as he once was. Between the evangelicals and more liberal Christians, Jesus was made available to other religions as a figure of wisdom and guidance. Jesus has been incorporated into the thinking of Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, and more. There are regular "revivals" during which the figure of Jesus is remade to serve some cultural, political, or religious purpose.

He points out that Albert Cleage declared Jesus and God both to be black. Reviewer David Orr appreciates the description of the tension between fundamentalists and revisionists.

Prothero offers a fascinating account of the uproar set off by an address delivered by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise at Carnegie Hall in 1925. Before a crowd of 3,000, Wise described how Jews had traditionally been led to believe that Jesus had never existed. In fact, he declared, Jesus was a Jew, and Jews should accept him as one of their own. The Orthodox-run Yiddish newspapers fiercely attacked wise. They claimed he was flirting with the Christian God. However, the Jewish establishment rallied around, and the modern idea of Jesus as "one of the greatest rabbis of all time" took hold. Today, Jewish scholars are in the forefront of the movement to recover the historical Jesus, and even Christian researchers have come to see him as more and more Jewish.

Prothero cites the Jewish acceptance of Jesus as evidence of one of his major themes -+that you don't have to be a Christian to love Jesus. Mormons, Hindus, Buddhists and other groups not in the mainstream have all sought to remake Jesus in their own image. In the process, Prothero maintains, they have "conspired to steal Jesus away from Christianity," freeing him to be all things to all people. The fact that the United States is a Jesus nation "does not make it a Christian one," Prothero writes. While the cultural authority of Jesus "has been used to promote the Christian tradition," it "has also been used to reform and subvert it, both from within and without, by Americans who see the man from Nazareth as a nondoctrinal, nondenominational non-Christian."

Orr thinks it wise for Prothero to point out that even fundamentalism is a modern conceit. Americans have monkeyed around with Jesus in every imaginable way, but we

inherited a Jesus whom various cultures and periods had already translated, filtered, and reinterpreted countless times.

Orr points to some missing voices, such as Latino and Native American ideas. However, he never pretends that his book is exhaustive.

Even in groups with no obvious connection to Christianity, the strategy he sees is always the same:

- 1) Separate Jesus from "corrupt Christianity."
- 2) Use this "cleansed" Jesus to critique the church or the culture.
- 3) Justify one's centrality by aligning with the "real" Jesus.

According to Charles, these four chapters are bristling with provocative insights and curious historical notes. If they do not treat such vast subjects with sufficient depth, they do lend support to the book's primary thesis about the function of Jesus in America as a great sliding signifier. Cultural histories of religion are - by design - spiritually tone deaf. Some readers will object to Prothero's tendency to regard everyone's concept of Jesus as motivated by cultural and economic forces. The historian who approaches Jesus in this way risks trying to explain the power of a symphony by analyzing the construction of each instrument. It is good to remember how wisely Prothero limits his ambitions, disavowing any attempt to describe "the living Christ of faith or the historical Jesus of scholarship." Instead, he uses the image of Jesus as "a Rorschach test of ever-changing national sensibilities." The results of that test, carried out with such energy and wit, will make it impossible to tolerate simplistic references to America's Christian or secular character ever again.

David Orr wonders: So what is Jesus? Who is Jesus? Here we watch a battle between those who cling to their cherished image of Jesus and those who need to wrest him away from them. It's an ever-revolving cast. The Jesus Prothero teases out is more Zen koan than King of Kings, an ever-flipping coin, a character actor adept at disappearing into whatever role he's asked to play.

Massing describes the Jesus Prothero esteems in the following way. He is wise, exemplary, ecumenical -- not just humane, but human. Yet, to Massing, one has to wonder how many other Americans share this vision, given the traditional view that many Americans have of Jesus.

## **In the Cut – 2003 Movie**

*In the Cut* is a 2003 movie. It runs 118 minutes. It received an R rating for strong sexuality. It made \$4.7 million. The basis of the story is a novel by Susanna Moore. Jane Campion wrote the screenplay. It stars Meg Ryan and Mark Ruffalo.

"In the Cut" has ornaments of a thriller about sexually bold women, but ticking away underneath is the familiar slasher genre in which women are the victims. What makes it stranger, and a little scarier than it might have been, is the way its heroine willfully sleepwalks into danger, dreaming of orgasm.

Frannie Avery (Meg Ryan, reshaping her image with a bad-girl role) is a high school English teacher who likes sex and wishes she got more of it, but not from the guys she has been getting it from, who tend to be obsessed weirdoes. Her half-sister Pauline (Jennifer Jason Leigh) is also sex-deprived; at one point, as they're discussing a man who Frannie has every reason to be wary of, Pauline advises her sister to sleep with the guy "if

only for the exercise." This man is James Malloy (Mark Ruffalo), a homicide detective, who meets Frannie while investigating the murder and "de-articulation" of a woman whose severed limb was found beneath Frannie's window. James is the kind of man who talks about sex in a way that would be offensive if he did not deliver so skillfully what he describes so crudely. "How did you make me feel like that?" Frannie asks him after their first encounter. He must have made her feel really good, because later, even after she begins to suspect he is the de-articulator, she goes on another date. This is a new variety of high-risk sex: Get as much action as you can before being de-articulated.

James wanders in a musky daze, too, in a movie where the sex is so good they both keep getting distracted by their duties as potential victim and possible killer. Their initial liaison leads to kinkier sex and the start of an unhealthy, dysfunctional relationship. As the two become more obsessed with each other, the killer strikes again and again, each time in an increasingly grotesque manner. Among the possible suspects is Cornelius (Sharrieff Pugh), a student of Frannie's with an interest in serial killer John Wayne Gacy. Another likely choice for losing his mind and hacking up women is Frannie's mental-case-of-an-ex-boyfriend, John Graham (Kevin Bacon). The bodies pile up and Frannie, trusting no one, comes up with her own idea of who the killer is and takes matters into her own hands. The movie locates these characters close to street level in a hard-bitten New York neighborhood where people act on their needs without apology. The story has fun playing against certain conventions of the slasher genre, and the dialogue has a nice way of sidestepping clichés. Listen to the words and watch the body language as James responds when Frannie asks him, "Did you kill her?"

The movie is leisurely, as thrillers go. It especially becomes leisurely in the intimate conversations of the two sisters, who sound and behave like two women who have understood each other very well for a long time. Frannie and Pauline have a verbal and emotional shorthand that creates a kind of conspiracy against the mechanics of the plot: Sometimes even when you are in danger you can still feel horny. And James' introductory pitch to Frannie, when he tells her who he can be and what he can do, shows that he knows who he is and who she is; that's why she lets him talk that way -- even though she walks out when his partner (Nick Damici) tries for the same crude note.

The movie has some smaller parts. Sharrieff Pugh plays Cornelius, a muscular African American who is Frannie's student; she meets him for tutoring in a pool hall with sex in the shadows, and the movie keeps trying to suggest something about them but never knows what it is. In a neighborhood bar for a tutoring session with one of her students, Frannie excuses herself to use the restroom and comes across a red-haired woman orally servicing a man who sports a distinctive tattoo on his wrist. Hiding herself behind a door, Frannie watches in fascination as these two strangers go at it. Frannie's act of voyeurism leads to her becoming a potential witness in a gruesome murder case. Kevin Bacon turns up as John Graham, an intern who works 18 hours a day, needs someone to walk his dog, and takes it very badly when Frannie breaks up with him.

Possibly the most intriguing element in the movie is the way Frannie is made so heedless of danger. She is drunk sometimes, but she acts as if she is on other stuff too, like maybe hog tranquilizers. She is smart enough to make sure James is really a cop before letting him into her apartment, but why does she get into various cars, go to various meetings, trust various situations, and arrive at obvious conclusions but then act as if she's forgotten them? What kind of eyesight does she have that she can see a three of

spades tattooed on the hand of a man whose face she looks right at but about which she is not sure? For that matter, what kind of coincidence is involved in that whole scene in the basement of the bar? What was the point of those ice-skating flashbacks?

## Winged Migration – 2003 Documentary

*Winged Migration* is a 2003 movie. It runs 89 minutes. It received a G rating.

According to Roger Ebert, Jacques Perrin's Oscar-nominated "Winged Migration" does for birds what the 1996 documentary "Microcosmos" did for insects: It looks at them intimately, very close up, in shots that seem impossible to explain. That the two plots intersect (birds eat insects) is just one of those things.

The movie, which is awesome to regard, is not particularly informative; it tells us that birds fly south in the winter (unless they live in the Southern Hemisphere, in which case they fly north), that they fly many hundreds or thousands of miles, and that they navigate by the stars, the sun, the Earth's gravitational field and familiar landmarks. These facts are widely known, and the movie's sparse narration tells us little else.

Facts are not the purpose of "Winged Migration." It wants to allow us to look, simply look, at birds--and that goal it achieves magnificently. There are sights here I will not easily forget. The film opens and closes with long aerial tracking shots showing birds in long-distance flight into the wind, and we realize how very hard it is to fly a thousand miles or more. We see birds stopping to eat (one slides a whole fish down its long neck). We see them feeding their young. We see them courting and mating, and going through chest-thumping rituals that are serious business, if you are a bird. We see cranes locking bills in what looks like play. We see birds trapped in industrial waste. And in a horrifying scene, a bird with a broken wing tries to escape on a sandy beach but cannot elude the crabs that catch it and pile onto the still-living body, all eager for a bite. In nature, as the film reminds us, life is all about getting enough to eat.

Roger Ebert wonders: How in the world did they get this footage? Lisa Nesselson, Variety's correspondent in Paris, supplies helpful information. To begin with, 225 feet of film were exposed for every foot that got into the movie. Some of the birds were raised to be the stars of the film; they were exposed to the sounds of airplanes and movie cameras while still in the shell, and greeted upon their arrival in the world by crewmembers. (We remember from "Fly Away Home" that newborn birds assume that whomever they see upon emerging must be a parent.) Some footage was made with cameras in ultra light aircraft. Other shots were taken from hot air balloons. There are shots in which they seem to have scripted the birds--they move toward the camera as it pulls back. Some scenes, I'm afraid, were manufactured entirely in the editing room, as when we see snow birds growing alarmed, we hear an avalanche, and then cut to long shots of the avalanche and matching shots of the birds in flight. Somehow, we know the camera was not in the path of the avalanche.

Life is a hard business, and birds work full time at it. Ebert was shocked by a sequence showing ducks in magnificent flight against the sky, and then dropping one by one as hunters kill them. The birds have flown exhaustingly for days to arrive at this end.

## Bruce Almighty – 2003 Movie

*Bruce Almighty* is a 2003 movie. It received a PG-13 rating. It runs 101 min. It stars Jim Carrey, Morgan Freeman (won best supporting actor), Jennifer Aniston, Philip Baker Hall, and Catherine Bell. It made \$242.5 million in the USA.

Bruce Nolan is a man for whom the most important thing on earth is to become an anchor on a Buffalo TV station. When he fails to achieve this pinnacle, he vents his anger at the very heavens themselves, challenging God to show and explain himself. One could argue that Bruce Nolan, Carrey's character, is not necessarily qualified to be an anchor, on the basis of two remote reports we see him delivering, one from the scene of a chocolate chip cookie of record-breaking size, the other from on board an anniversary cruise of the Maid of the Mist, the famous Niagara Falls tour boat. During the cruise, he learns while on the air, live, that he will not be getting the coveted anchor job, and goes ballistic, even uttering the dread f-word in his dismay. Now that may argue that he is a loose cannon and not fit to anchor anyway (although he would be replacing a man whose primary skill seems to be smiling). Nevertheless, in anger and grief, and facing the loss of the love of his faithful girlfriend Grace, he calls upon God and God answers.

God is, in this case, a man in a white suit, played by Morgan Freeman with what one can only describe as godlike patience with Bruce. Since Bruce is so dissatisfied with the job God is doing, God turns the controls of the universe over to him--or at least, the controls over his immediate neighborhood in Buffalo. Although at one point these limited powers seem to extend directly above Buffalo to such an extent that Bruce is able to change the distance of the moon, causing tidal waves in Japan.

God has a warm detachment that seems just right for this move. You get the feeling that even while he is giving Bruce the free ride, he has a hand on the wheel, like a drivers' training instructor. Grace is a sweet kindergarten teacher and fiancée.

The problem with playing God, the movie demonstrates, is that when a human being receives such powers, short-term notions tend to be valued higher than long-term improvement plans. Consider, for example, the way Bruce deals with a dog that pees in the house (the payoff shot, showing the dog learning a new way to use the newspaper, had me laughing so loudly that people were looking at me). Consider Bruce's methods for dealing with traffic jams, which work fine for Bruce, but not so well for everyone else; when you are God, you cannot think only of yourself.

In chapter 13, Bruce is overwhelmed by the prayer requests of the people – from Buffalo. He starts out being annoyed by the voices in his head. Then, God brings him to Mount Everest and informs him that the voices are prayers. How many people has he helped in the week that he has been God? Well, he was going to get around to that. He had a few wrongs to right in his own life first. He wonders how he is going to organize the prayers. He thinks of files first, but it leaves no room in his apartment. He thinks of post it notes, and they fly all over the room. He then has the prayer requests put in a computer. He responds to the 1.5 million prayers by answering “Yes” to all the prayers. Of course, this eventually creates a problem, especially with all the winners to the lottery.

In chapter 14, Grace leaves Bruce. She says sarcastically, “Other girls want to marry the man they love and start a family, but just give me a big boat and lots of money. That will make me happy. He says to God, “How do you make someone love you without affecting free will?” At the end, Bruce reaches out his arms and says to Grace, “Love me.” “I did.”

In chapter 15, some interesting insights occur. Being God is not so easy. As Bruce and God clean the floor of the building, God says that no matter how dirty something gets, one can always clean it up. Bruce says he thought answering yes to all the prayers would solve the problems people had. God wonders when anyone really has a clue to what he or she need. People want me to do everything for them, but they have the power. Be the miracle. The problem is, people keep looking up.

Chapter 18, God tells Bruce to pray. He starts praying for peace in the world. God says that was good if you want to me Miss America. Now, tell me about something you really want.

This movie is charming, the kind of movie where Bruce learns that while he may not ever make a very good God, the experience may indeed make him a better television reporter.

## **Luther – 2003 Movie**

*Luther* is a 2003 drama and biography movie. It received a PG-13 rating. It made \$5.6 million in the USA. It runs 113 minutes. Joseph Fiennes plays Martin Luther. The movie is a biography of Martin Luther from his early days as a student cleric, through his efforts at reforming ecclesial abuses until he leaves the Catholic Church and begins his own.

Martin Luther was the moral force of the Reformation, the priest who defied Rome, nailed his 95 Theses to the castle door and essentially founded the Protestant movement. He must have been quite a man. Yet, as the movie informs us, he had his down moments: "Most days, I'm so depressed I can't even get out of bed." He was also a challenging student in class. When one cleric is preaching, "there is no salvation outside the Church," Luther asks, "What of the Greek Christians?" and the professor is stumped. The most fun comes from the performance of grand old Sir Peter as Friedrich, who treasures his collection of sacred relics but sweeps them all aside after Luther casts doubt on their worth and authenticity. Luther has a funny speech pointing out that many saints left behind more body parts than they started out with. "Eighteen out of 12 disciples are buried in Spain," cracks the monk to a roomful of roaring theology students.

The film follows the highlights of Luther's life, from his early days as a law student, through his conversion during a lightning storm, to his days as a bright young Augustinian monk who catches the eye of his admiring superior, Johann von Staupitz.

He is sent to Rome, where the open selling of indulgences repels him. He heard the refrain, "When a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from Purgatory springs." The sight of the proud Pope Leo XII, galloping off to the hunt, does also not inspire him and when he returns to Germany, it is with a troubled conscience that eventually leads to his revolt.

The political climate made it expedient for powerful German princes to support the rebel monk against their own emperor and the power of Rome. In scenes involving Frederick the Wise, we see him using Luther as a way to define his own power, and we see bloody battles fought between Luther's supporters and forces loyal to the Church. However, Luther stands aside from these uprisings, is appalled by the violence, and, we suspect, if he had it all to do over again, would think twice. Another major role is the papal adviser Cirolamo Aleandro, who correctly sees the threat posed by Luther and demands his excommunication and punishment, but, for a political insider, misjudges the

climate among the princes of Germany. The movie makes it clear to us, as it should to him, that for the power brokers in Germany, Luther's rebellion has as much secular as spiritual significance: He provides the moral rationale for a break they already desired to make.

Luther is quite human in this movie. The review by Roger Ebert shows that he does not like this side of the movie. Yet, from what I know of his biography, Luther had this side. He seems weak, neurotic, filled with self-doubt, unwilling to embrace the implications of his protest. He leaves the priesthood and marries the nun Katharina von Bora.

In one scene (0:58:39 to 1:00:00) Cardinal Cajetan tries to explain Martin Luther's writings and teachings to the pope. "He calls you an ass, Cajetan." "The point is that he does not write in Latin. Luther writes in German. That is his sword." The pope says, "So he does not play like a gentleman?" Aleander says, "Ordinary Germans can quote his work." Cajetan says, "If we wait, it could be too late." The pope says, "You exaggerate his importance. Besides, you told me yourself you agree with his list of abuses." "Some of his concerns have long been held by those who love the church, yes." The pope responds, "I don't suppose your little monk would be interested in a cardinal's hat?" "I think he would be ashamed to wear it, Your Holiness." Aleander says, "We must put pressure on Prince Frederick, Excellency." Cajetan says, "Aleander is right. Frederick is our key to Luther. Germany is on the brink of chaos, and we don't want to divide the church." The pope said, "I grow tired of you missing the big picture, Cajetan. That's why I've sent Karl von Miltitz to Germany in your stead."

In one scene (1:11:18 to 1:19:51), Luther stands before the Emperor. "They'll burn him for sure," says someone from the crowd. One representative of the church stands up and asks Luther to recant what he has written. He asks for time to consider. "I would like to answer satisfactorily, in faithfulness to the divine word and without danger to my soul." The Emperor grants him one day. He struggles with the devil during the evening. He ends by prostrating himself on the floor, "I am yours," he says to God. Will he recant his writings? He begins by saying that his writings are in three categories. His general writings for spiritual growth are consistent with Christian teaching. To renounce them would be to renounce the teachings of the church. The other part of my writings denounces the foul doctrine and evil living of the popes. If I recant these books, I would open the doors to this tyranny. He admitted that he may have judged some individuals too harshly in other writings. However, his opponents tell him that he is not to give speeches. "You will draw into question the teaching of the church. You are obligated to believe. Will you recant, or will you not?" "Since you want simple replies, I will give it to you. Unless I am convinced by Scripture and by plain reason, and not by Popes and councils who have so often contradicted themselves my conscience is captive to the word of God. To go against conscience is neither right nor safe. I cannot and I will not recant. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me

## **Seabiscuit – 2003 Movie**

*Seabiscuit* is a 2003 movie starring Tobey Maguire, Jeff Bridges, and Chris Cooper. The story has its basis in the true story as told by Laura Hillenbrand in her best-selling novel.



Seabiscuit was a small horse with a lazy side. Sleeping and eating were his favorite occupations early in life, and he was not particularly well behaved. To his credit, he was the grandson of the great Man of War. That was before he met three men who would shape him into the best-loved sports legend of the 1930s, running from 1936 to 1940. The owner was Charles Howard, who had a knack for spotting potential in outcasts. The trainer was Tom Smith, who was called a screwball for thinking he could heal horses other trainers would have shot. The jockey was Red Pollard, who started out as an exercise boy and stable cleaner because in the Depression he would settle for anything.

The Depression had brought America to its knees. The nation needed something to believe in. In the somewhat simplified calculus of the movie, both Seabiscuit and Roosevelt's New Deal, more or less in that order, were a shot in the American arm. If an underdog like Seabiscuit could win against larger and more famous horses with distinguished pedigrees, then maybe there was a chance for anyone.

After Seabiscuit has conquered all of the champion horses of the West, Charles Howard begins a strategy to force a match race between his horse and War Admiral, the Eastern champion and Triple Crown winner, owned by Samuel Riddle. He goes on a whistle-stop campaign across the country and builds up such an overwhelming groundswell of public sentiment that Riddle caves in and agrees--in his terms, of course, which makes the race all the more dramatic. The radio broadcast of that historic race was heard, we are told, by the largest audience in history. Businesses closed for the afternoon so their employees could tune in.

Roger Ebert says he saw people crying after this movie. He says this shows that people more readily cry at the movies, not because of sadness, but because of goodness and courage.

In one scene (41 min) Charles and Tom meet for the first time. Tom has a white horse that will never race, he says, "You don't throw a whole live away just because he is banged up a little."

## **Good Bye, Lenin! – 2003 Movie**

*Good-bye Lenin!*, a 2003 movie, a touching comedy (German, with English subtitles). It concerns a fervent communist East German mother who has a heart attack when she sees the Berlin Wall fall and wakes up six months later. Because the doctor tells the son that she cannot withstand any more shocks, he recreates their former life to save her. In one scene (1:18:06 to 1:23:50), the son finds the pickles that his mother used to enjoy, but they had all been thrown away due to their inferior quality as compared to the West. The son falls asleep, while the mother eats the pickles. She starts walking for the first time since came home from the hospital. She looks outside the window and sees new, strange things. She walks outside and sees a new world of cars and neighbors. At the end of the scene, she sees the upper half of a large Lenin statue, hauled by helicopter, flying past her, almost waving goodbye to her. The sights confuse her. In another scene (1:39:52 to 1:42:50), the boy looks around at the party in his father's house. He finds two children in a little room, watching Sandman. Their father comes in. The father says, "Excuse me, do we know each other?" The boy says, "Yes, we do." "I am afraid I forgot your name." His son says, "His name is Alexander." At that point, light dawns in the eyes of the father. He

says, "Alex?" He knows the person to who is talking is his son. He is called away to his speech.

## **Spider-man – 2002 Sermon**

*Spider-man* is a 2002 sci-fi movie. It runs 121 min. it received a PG-13 rating. It made \$403.7 million in the USA. It stars Tobey Maguire, Willem Dafoe, Kirsten Dunst, James Franco, Cliff Robertson, and Rosemary Harris. It received an academy nomination for best sound and best visual effects.

Ordinary Peter Parker is bitten by a radioactive spider and gains superpowers with which to fight crime. The film tells Spidey's origin story--who Peter Parker is, who Aunt May and Uncle Ben are, how Peter's an outcast at school, how he burns with unrequited love for Mary Jane Watson, how he peddles photos of Spider-Man to cigar-chomping editor J. Jonah Jameson. The origin story is well told, and the characters will not disappoint anyone who values the original comic books.

Roger Ebert informs me that Peter Parker was crucial in the evolution of Marvel comics because he was fallible and had recognizable human traits. He was a nerd, a loner, socially inept, insecure, a poor kid being raised by relatives. Mary Jane gains gradually increasing interest in this loser who begins to seem attractive to her. The villain is complex, who in his Dr. Jekyll manifestation is brilliant tycoon Norman Osborn and in his Mr. Hyde persona is a cackling psychopath. Osborn's son Harry is a rich kid, embarrassed by his dad's wealth, who is Peter's best and only friend, and Norman is affectionate toward Peter even while their alter-egos are deadly enemies. That works, and there is an effective scene where Osborn has a conversation with his invisible dark side.

Consider a sequence early in the film, after Peter Parker is bitten by a mutant spider and discovers his new powers. His hand is sticky. He does not need glasses anymore. He was scrawny yesterday, but today he has muscles. The movie shows him becoming aware of these facts, but insufficiently amazed (or frightened by them. He learns how to spin and toss webbing, and finds that he can make enormous leaps. Then there is a scene where he is like a kid with a new toy, jumping from one rooftop to another, making giant leaps, whooping with joy.

## **Mostly Martha – 2002 German Film**

*Mostly Martha* is a 2002 German film, in which Martha is a tightly wound gourmet chef for a chic restaurant who seeks only perfection in her work. She lives for her work and neglects other aspects of her life, like dating and family. Martha rules the kitchen, and her cooking abilities are without parallel. However, co-workers and boss do not appreciate her brash style. After Martha's confrontation with customers over how she prepares foie gras, her supervisor demands that she consult a therapist. Unfortunately, her shrink is unable to focus on treatment because his patient is always discussing the extraordinary food she plans to prepare that evening. A car accident leaves her sister dead, and her obsessive life is turned upside down when she must take in her orphaned 9-year-old niece. She must adapt to the demands of an 8 year old. Further, the owner of the restaurant hires an Italian chef whom she sees as a rival. Eventually, of course, Mario's

cheerfulness and ease with people will help Martha's relationship with her co-workers, and eventually sparks will coruscate between the two cooks.

In the opening scene (0:00 to 9:24), Martha is on the couch of a therapist talking about food. She talks of the wonders of food. How one prepares pigeon, and what one eats with it, is the theme of her talk. The therapist interrupts her. "Why do you come here every week?" she responds, "Why do you ask?" "Well, I thought perhaps it might be helpful to know." She responds, "My boss says she'll fire me, if I don't go to therapy." He says, "Why do you think your boss believes you need therapy?" She says, "You know what? I have no idea!" While at the restaurant, she gets into a fight with a customer who says the *foi gras* is undercooked. She disagrees vigorously. Her boss says that if she were not the second best chef in the city, she would fire her. Finally, she is in her apartment, she prepares a new dish, and eats alone.

In another scene (1:04:16 to 1:07, drinking wine), Mario cooks for Martha and her niece. In fact, the niece and Mario will cook on their own for Martha. No tables or plates are needed. Mario talks soccer. Slowly, the niece starts eating. Of course, the kitchen is a mess. Martha starts getting so anxious that she cannot breathe. They play "pick up sticks." He starts being romantic. Suddenly, she is back on the couch of the therapist. She notes that the chef for either Napoleon or Louis XIV killed himself because he could not get one dish just right. The therapist asks, "Why are you telling me this?" She says, "Some things cannot be changed, no matter how you try." He wonders if she has ever been to Italy, and she says no.

## About a Boy – 2002 Movie

About a Boy (:48 to 3:18; 1:33:59 to 1:36:07) is a 2002 movie, starring Hugh Grant, Nicholas Hoult, Toni Collette, and Rachel Weisz. Will is a young, rich bachelor who has everything money can buy. He crashes a single moms' club by lying about having kids in order to get dates. In the opening sequence, with credits, Will hears an episode of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire." Who said, "No man is an island"? The person responded that it was easy – Jon Bon Jovi. (Of course, the real answer was John Donne.) In any case, Will offers a bit of his philosophy of life. All men are islands. Now is a perfect time to be one. This is an island age. In the past, people had to depend on other people. They did not have television, movies, DVD's; in fact, they did not have anything cool. You can make yourself an island paradise. He likes to think he is that kind of island. He is a cool island. The scene switches to young Marcus lying on the bed, offering his own bit of philosophy. There are people out there who have a good time in life. He was just beginning to realize that he was not one of them. He did not fit at his old high school. He definitely did not fit at his new high school. He understands that some parents teach their children. His mother could not, unless he paid her. She was a single mom, and spent much of her time working and being tired. Therefore, he had to go to school. Going back to Will, as he gets into his car in the morning, he says, "The sad fact is, every island dweller has to go to the mainland once in a while." At the end of the film, Will amends his philosophy of life. Now, he stands by the philosophy that "Every man is island." However, some men are part of island chains. They are actually connected. Marcus' girl friend Ellie, Will's girl friend Rachel, Marcus' mother and her date, Rachel's son, end the movie sharing

Christmas dinner together. Marcus's concluding observation is that we all need back up. Like Jon Bon Jovi said, "No man is an island."

## **Changing Lanes - 2002 Movie**

Changing Lanes is a 2002 movie in which two men, Doyle played by Samuel Jackson and Gavin played by Ben Afflack, have an accident on the Brooklyn Bridge on Good Friday. Because neither will take the blame, a series of events takes place leading ultimately to responsibility, reconciliation and restitution. In one scene (7:37 to 10:25), we find each man coming from home and work, getting in the car, and having an accident. Doyle exits a toy store and get in his car. He is on his way to a custody hearing. Gavin is an attorney on his way to an important court date. After the accident, he wants to give Doyle a blank check to pay for damages. Doyle wants to do this right and exchange insurance cards. In another scene (1:05-52 to 1:07:47) Gavin goes to confession on Good Friday. The priest chants while carrying the cross. Gavin says he did not really want to go to confession. Gavin wants the world to have meaning. He lives in a world where his father in law gets him to take away the money of a decent man and his wife cheers him on. God just puts two people together in a brown paper bag and makes them go at each other. At he end (1:23 to 1:34:30), the William Hurt character enters, saying to Doyle that his drug of choice is not alcohol, but chaos and disaster. Gavin asks his father-in-law how he can live with himself. His response is that at the end of the day, he does more good than he does harm. Doyle and Gavin finally talk with each other as human beings. Doyle gives back the file Gavin has needed and Gavin starts to do some pro bono work from the office. Gavin talks to the wife of Doyle, and she allows Doyle to be with his kids again. It was a very bad day.

## **Ocean's Eleven – 2001 Movie**

*Ocean's Eleven* is a 2001 crime, gangster, and comedy movie. It stars George Clooney as Danny Ocean, Brad Pitt as Rusty Ryan, Andy Garcia as Terry Benedict, Julia Roberts as Tess Ocean, Casey Affleck as Virgil Malloy, and Matt Damon as Linus Caldwell. The move has a 106-minute run time. It received a PG-13 rating. It made \$183.4 in USA sails. The movie is a remake of 1960 Frank Sinatra movie. The movie received award nominations best acting ensemble from Broadcast Film Critics Association and best picture from National Board of Review.

Less than 24 hours into his parole from a New Jersey penitentiary, the charismatic thief is already rolling out his next plan. Danny Ocean is a smooth operator who, his parole board notes, figured in a dozen investigations where he was never charged. He wants to pull off the most sophisticated, elaborate casino heist in history. In one night, Danny's handpicked 11-man crew of specialists - including an ace card shark, a master pickpocket and a demolition genius - will attempt to steal over \$150 million from three Las Vegas casinos owned by Terry Benedict, the elegant, ruthless entrepreneur who just happens to be dating Danny's ex-wife Tess. Why do the job? "Because the house always wins. Yet, sometimes you get the perfect hand, and you beat the house." He will depend upon some people whom Terry Benedict has defeated in business deals to give him the upfront money to destroy Terry Benedict. Casing the job, Rusty sees the casino owner

Terry Benedict with a woman he recognizes: Tess Ocean, Danny's ex-wife. "Tell me it isn't about her," Rusty begs Danny. Of course it is. "Does he make you laugh," asks Danny to Tess. "He doesn't make me cry." Amazingly, the movie specifies and shoots in real casinos (the Mirage, the MGM Grand and the Bellagio) and incorporates the destruction of the Desert Inn. Is this a coincidence or is this a motive? Only Danny knows for sure. To score the cash, he will have to risk his life and his chance of reconciling with Tess. However, if it all goes according to Danny's intricate, nearly impossible plan, he won't have to choose between his stake in the heist and his high-stakes reunion with Tess... or will he?

The outlines of a caper movie are long and well established: the scary external shot of the impenetrable targets; the inside information; the voice-over as we see guards going about their work, and the plan with the split-second timing. "Ocean's Eleven" even includes an elaborate full-scale mock-up of the strong room used by the three casinos, leading to such practical questions as, (1) Why does it need to be this elaborate? (2) How much did it cost? and (3) Who contracted it for them, or did they knock it together themselves overnight?

The plan gives the impression of smooth and slick criminals. In one scene, (30:30 to 33:36), Danny lays out the difficulty of stealing \$150 million from the casino. In the next scene (33:37 to 35:07), they must know the casino and the people who work there, they must put the power out, and they must fool the surveillance system. In one scene (1:03:57 to 1:04:30), we see an example of the slick quality of these thieves. Rusty advises Linus as to how to conduct himself so that no one will notice him. "Where are you going to put your hands? No good. Don't touch your time look at me. You need to answer my question. Where do you look? No. Look down, they know you're lying. Up, and you don't know the truth. Don't use seven words if four will do. Be specific, but no memorable. Be funny, but don't make him laugh. He's got to like you, then forget you once you leave.

## **The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring - 2001 Movie**

*The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, is a 2001 movie that won four academy awards, although none of the "big" ones.

Frodo Baggins, a hobbit resident of the medieval "Middle-earth," discovers that a ring bequeathed to him by beloved relative and benefactor Bilbo is in fact the "One Ring," a device that will allow its master to manipulate dark powers and enslave the world. The temptation to use the ring of power appears innocent at first, but it wants evil powers to find it. The wizard Gandalf charges Frodo to return the ring to Mount Doom, the evil site where it was forged millennia ago and the only place where one can destroy it. Accompanying Frodo is a fellowship of eight others. Frodo accepts the task of finding and destroying a ring that has the power to corrupt anyone who possesses it. Tolkien, in his trilogy, made the hobbit the center of the story. In the movie, special effects, wizards, sorcery, and warriors seem to take over the story.

In one scene, (2:44:15 to 2:47:40) Frodo knows that the only chance of saving Middle Earth is to destroy the ring in the fires of Mordor, but he also knows that it is a suicide mission. He stands at the bank of the river. He remembers an earlier conversation with Gandalf. As Frodo looks down at the ring in his hand he says that he wishes that the ring had never come into his possession. Wise Gandalf says, "So do I, and so do all who

live to see such times. But that is not for us to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us." Frodo decides to go on his quest alone, without his companions, and he sets off in a boat to cross the lake. However, his faithful friend, Samwise, finds him:

Frodo: Go back, Sam. I'm going to Mordor alone.

Sam: Of course you are. And I'm coming with you.

Sam jumps in after him, even though he cannot swim. Sam almost drowns as he crosses the river, but Frodo saves him. "I made a promise, "Don't you leave him, Samwise Gamgee. And I don't mean to. I don't mean to." Frodo says, "Come on, then."

## Wit – 2001 HBO Special

*Wit* is a 2001 HBO special. A professor, when diagnosed with cancer, is forced to re-examine her life. Margaret Edson's Pulitzer-winning script is faithfully adapted to the small screen by director Mike Nichols and star Emma Thompson in this HBO special. Thompson plays Vivian Bearing, a professor of 17th Century poetry specializing in "the Holy Sonnets of John Donne." The intellect is everything to Vivian--which is why, when she is diagnosed with stage four ovarian cancer--"there is no stage five"--she agrees to undergo aggressive chemotherapy in the name of cancer research. "You must be very tough," her doctor tells her, and Vivian is nothing if not tough--a tough professor who is tough on her students. Yet as her treatment--and her cancer--progresses, Vivian finds that what she needs most isn't the cold rationality with which she's lived her whole life and which is amply evidenced by the hospital staff attending her, but the simple human kindness shown by her primary nurse and her former mentor. This beautiful meditation on death and humanity is shot in close-ups that linger on Emma Thompson's spare, emotionally naked performance. Nichols's sure-handed direction brings out both the script's own wit and its poignancy.

In one scene (1:22:00 to 1:29:30), the deathbed scene, the professor's favorite teacher from the past visits her. She reads *The Runaway Bunny* to her and cradles her as she dies.

Once there was a little bunny who wanted to run away,  
So he said to his mother, "I am running away."  
"If you run away," said his mother, "I will run after you.  
For you are my little bunny."  
"If you run after me," said the little bunny,  
"I will become a fish in a trout stream  
And I will swim away from you."  
If you become a fish in a trout stream,  
Said his mother  
I will become a fisherman and I will fish for you."

Ah, look at that, Vivian, a little allegory of the soul. Wherever it hides, God will find you.

If you catch me, said the bunny,  
I will be a bird and fly away from you.

If you become a bird and fly away from me,  
Said his mother,  
I will be a tree that you come home to.

Very clever.

Shucks, said the bunny.  
Then I might as well as stay where I am  
And be your little bunny.

And so he did.

Have a carrot, said his mother.

The teacher says: "Time to go." She kisses her on the forehead.  
"And flights of angels  
sing thee to thy rest."

The movie concludes with her voice of Vivian reciting a portion of "Death be not proud,"  
by John Donne, 1573-1631

DEATH be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadfull, for, thou art not so,  
For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow,  
Die not, poore death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures bee,       5  
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,  
And soonest our best men with thee doe goe,  
Rest of their bones, and soules deliverie.  
Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,  
And dost with poyson, warre, and sicknesse dwell,   10  
And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well,  
And better then thy stroake; why swell'st thou then;  
One short sleepe past, wee wake eternally,  
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.

Another updated version

DEATH, be not proud, though some have callèd thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so:  
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow  
Die not, poor Death; nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From Rest and Sleep, which but thy picture be,       5  
Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow;  
And soonest our best men with thee do go—  
Rest of their bones and souls' delivery!  
Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,

And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell; 10  
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well  
And better than thy stroke. Why swell'st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,  
And Death shall be no more: Death, thou shalt die!

## Keeping the Faith – 2000 Movie

*Keeping the Faith* is a PG-13, year 2000 comedy and romance, as well as some religion and politics. It made \$37 million dollars. A young Catholic priest, Brian (Edward Norton) and a young Jewish rabbi (Ben Stiller), friends since they were children, decide to be relevant in their preaching and ministry when they return to their home parish and synagogue, raising a few eyebrows.

In one scene, (chapter 4, 0:10:38 to 0:13:41) Father Brian begins to narrate the story of when he and Rabbi Jake preached their first sermons. These sermons turn out to be dialogues with the people in the pews. The elderly rabbi says to Jake, “Take it nice and easy. Win’em over slowly, okay?” Jake says, “Okay.” Jake begins his first message with “Shabbat shalom, everyone.” When the congregation responds feebly, he says, “Oh, guys, come on! Let’s try one more time. Shabbat shalom.” His mom responds enthusiastically. “Okay, my mom was the only person in the room approximating the level of Shabbat shalom-iness that I think we can hit. Now, give me somethin’ I can work with, folks. Shabbat shalom!” After the congregation responds enthusiastically, Jake says, “all right! Now we’re ready to daven!”

Brian begins his first sermon, “Before we get started, I want you all to do me a favor. I want everybody in the back to come forward and fill up these first three rows here. Ma’am, you in the back. Yes, you. Come on! God hates a solo artist, I promise you. We’re gonna be the Fugees here this morning, no Lauryn Hills.” Someone starts to leave, to which he says, “Sir, you’re leaving. Why, it’s customary to sneak out after the communion.

Brian then narrates, “I don’t wanna brag, but the word got out there was a new act in town, and soon we were playing to the packed house I knew we’d been destined for.

The message by Jake is on Sodom and Gomorrah. “But, seriously, what is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah really about?” Steve Posner says sexual perversion, which shows he watching too much Spice Channel. “And Lot takes them in, and he protects them. What happens next?” The elderly lady who knew that God spared Lot and his family will get a cruise. Then he says, “You know, when you think about it, God is a lot like Blanche DuBois. He’s always relied on the kindness of strangers. And that’s really what the story’s about – us taking care of each other. God relies on us take care of each other.

The message by Brian is on The Seven deadly Sins. He wants to know who can name them. “People, it was a popular film with Brad Pitt. You have the ultimate Cliff Note.” Brian concludes his message: “The truth is, I don’t really learn that much about your faith by asking questions like that. Those aren’t really questions about faith, those are questions about religion, and it’s very important to understand the difference between religion and faith. Faith is not about having the right answers. Faith is a feeling. Faith is a hunch, really. It’s a hunch that there is something bigger connecting it all, connect us all



together. And that feeling, that hunch, is God. And coming here tonight, on your Sunday evening, to connect with that feeling – that is an act of faith. So all I have to do is look around the room at this packed church to know that we're doing pretty well as a community, even if all of you failed my pop quiz miserably. So let us pray.”

Both Brian and Jake fall in love with their long-lost childhood friend, Anna (Jenna Elfman), has grown into a beautiful corporate executive. She has returned to Manhattan to pursue her hectic business career. She reenters Jake's and Brian's lives and hearts with a vengeance. However, Brian has taken a vow of celibacy, and Jewish mothers in his temple are constantly setting up Jake. The workaholic Anna is not Jewish, but this does not stop her from returning Jake's affection and beginning a relationship that they hide from Brian. As their relationship progresses, complications arise, leading Jake, Brian, and Anna to deal with questions of both religious and romantic faith.

Problems arise when the film is supposed to render religious fervor with accuracy. Jake and Brian seem more like the fantasies of someone who is completely irreligious than someone who has had to struggle with faith. We see this in Jake's use of a black gospel choir to get his congregation into the swing of things during synagogue, or the thoroughly fanciful notion of Jake and Brian's idea of a joint Catholic-Jewish community center. We see this in the sermons of Jake and Brian, all of which function more as show business than as religion. Neither one of them seems to have any connection to God whatsoever, seemingly more interested in their careers than in spreading the word of God. The filmmakers seem to think that they're making some sort of religious point by having Jake confess his sins on Yom Kippur- “the Superbowl of the Jewish calendar” -and tying this all in with the ongoing soap-opera of his relationships. The film lacks religious understanding that makes the film a great deal less effective than it might have been.

## **Boiler Room -2000 Movie**

*Boiler Room* is a 2000 movie in the drama, thriller, and crime genre, rated R for strong language and some drug content. It made \$16.9 million in the US market. It stars Giovanni Ribisi, Vin Diesel, Ben Affleck, Jamie Kennedy, Scott Caan, and Ron Rifkin. A young man who runs an illegal casino from his apartment graduates to become a top-selling stockbroker without ethics. Giovanni Ribisi plays a Seth Davis, a nineteen-year-old college dropout who runs a casino out of his Queens apartment. When his father, a respected judge, discovers that he has dropped out of school and begun to run an illegal casino from his apartment. He expresses disappointment with Seth. Seth has a powerful need for acceptance from his father. Seth meets Greg, a stockbroker whom he hopes will help him redeem himself. The boiler room he joins is on Long Island. His co-workers are young, aggressive, and driven. He falls under the materialistic influence of Greg and Chris. He soon learns to close deals of his own. He starts dating Abby, the receptionist of the firm. Soon, he learns that J. T. Marlin is not the honest firm he initially thought they were. The profit of the company derives from the selling of phony stocks to under-educated buyers. He makes the decision to get out of the game. However, it might already be too late. He will need to sacrifice himself to bring down the company.

In one scene ( ), Seth Davis delivers a monologue. “I read this article a while back, that said that Microsoft employs more millionaire secretary's than any other

company in the world. They took stock options over Christmas bonuses. It was a good move. I remember there was this picture, of one of the groundskeepers next to his Ferrari. Blew my mind. You see shit like that, and it just plants seeds, makes you think its possible, even easy. And then you turn on the TV, and there's just more of it. The \$87 Million lottery winner, that kid actor that just made 20 million his last movie, that internet stock that shot through the roof, you could have made millions if you had just gotten in early, and that's exactly what I wanted to do: get in. I didn't want to be an innovator any more, i just wanted to make the quick and easy buck, I just wanted in. The Notorious BIG said it best: "Either you're slingin' crack-rock, or you've got a wicked jump-shot." Nobody wants to work for it anymore. There's no honor in taking that after school job at Mickey Dee's, honor's in the dollar, kid. So I went the white boy way of slinging crack-rock: I became a stock broker." He concludes by admitting that he has a strong work ethic, but that his problem is that he had no ethics in his work.

## **Bedazzled – 2000 Movie**

Bedazzled is year 2000 movie of a modern rendition of Faust, in which the devil, in the form of a beautiful woman, played by Elizabeth Hurly, wants the soul of the naïve Elliott Richard, played by Brendan Fraser, in exchange for seven wishes that she will grant him. The movie is a remake of a 1967 remake of a movie starring Peter Cook and Raquel Welch. Of course, every wish goes wrong. He wants the love of a woman. He wants wealth and power. He wants to be the most sensitive man in the world, but Allison gets frustrated: "I want a life with a man who will ignore me and take me for granted and only pretend to be interested in me to get in my pants." He then wishes to be great professional basketball player. He wishes for popularity. He finally considers doing something for others, which starts with being President of the USA – Abraham Lincoln.

At one point, (1:10:42 to 1:15:35): he goes to church, telling a minister that he needs to talk to God. When he tells the minister about his contract in which he sells his soul to the Devil, he minister has him brought to jail. Elliott ends up in a jail cell (1:11:44 to 1:15:35) because he sounded so crazy to the minister of the church to which he went. The Devil is an officer who places him in his cell. His cellmate says she is the Devil. "What are you in for?" "Eternity." "Why?" "I sold my soul." "I hope you got something good for it." "I got nothing for it." "You got a bad deal. But it doesn't matter anyway. You cannot sell your soul, because it does not belong to you in the first place." "It doesn't? Then, who does it belong to?" "It belongs to God, the great unifying force that holds everything together. The Devil will try to confuse you. You will make mistakes along the way, everyone does. But if you just open your heart and your mind, you will get it." "Who are you?" "Just a friend, a really good friend." The man turns out to be a messenger from God. Elliott awakes to the truth.

In the end (1:15:36 to 1:27:00), he decides that he does not want another wish. There is nothing he wants – at least, nothing the Devil can give him. He has spent his life wishing he were something else. He realized that it was not so much where we end up in life, but how we get there. He finally wishes that Allison has a happy life. This wish breaks the contract with the Devil. The Devil says, "I'm going to let you in on a little secret. This whole thing between God and me, heaven and hell, is really quite simple. The choice is yours. You make heaven or hell right here on earth. I guess you have made

your choice.” The Devil then says, “I really liked you, you know.” Elliott responds, “To tell you the truth, you have been the best friend I have ever had.” He meets Allison, talks with her, but she is dating someone else. He bicycles home. A new girl moves in next-door, who looks exactly like Allison. They end up dating. In the final scene, the Devil and the man who was in the messenger of God in the jail cell play chess against each other.

## **Chocolat – 2000 Movie**

The movie, *Chocolat*, starred Juliette Binoche, Johnny Depp, Judi Dench, and Alfred Molina. It was nominated in 2000 for an Academy Award for Best Picture. It relates the mythical story of a town in France that enjoyed its tranquility, until a woman opens a chocolate store during Lent. The powerful and self-righteous mayor is offended by the presence of the store and its owner. Some river rats, people who live in boats and move along the river, enter the story. The mayor and church people of the town reject them, but the owner of the chocolate store graciously welcomes them. The self-righteous mayor writes the sermons for the town priest, who seems to want a more joyful approach to the faith than the mayor has. Although the owner of the store invites the town to a party for an old woman of the town, the people do not come. They move the party to the boat people. They have fun, while the rest of the town is in a judgmental mood. A disastrous fire occurs. This leads the owner of the store and her child to prepare to leave the town. However, some of the people experience remorse and come to help make the chocolate. They make beautiful and creative designs with the chocolate. The mayor cannot believe it when he sees his own secretary enter the chocolate shop. The mayor bows at the altar of the church, wanting to know what to do, since he has failed. Believing he has a word from God, he enters the shop at night, cuts up and destroys the chocolate statues the people had just made, but gets a piece of the chocolate in his mouth. Then he cannot stop eating it. He enjoys it. He cries and falls asleep in the shop. The priest, who happens to walk along the street, sees him. The next morning, the owner gives him Alka Seltzer, to deal with the inevitable stomachache from eating so much chocolate. The priest preaches his own sermon on Easter Sunday. He says we cannot measure our goodness by what we do not do and by whom we exclude. We measure our goodness by our acts of kindness and by whom we welcome. The people join with the chocolate store in an Easter party. The people feel a strange release and joy.

## **The Castaway – 2000 Movie**

In the year 2000 movie *Cast Away*, Tom Hanks plays a busy Fed Ex executive married to Helen Hunt. He is so focused on business that he forgets that the wife of his close business associate battles cancer. He must leave a family Christmas Eve party. Flying over the Pacific Ocean, the plane loses pressure and altitude. The plane crashes. He washes up on an island. He starts dealing with the things he has. Items that used to be of value to him, are not so any longer. He throws away his pager that had been his companion in business. He keeps the pocket watch with the picture of his wife. He starts collecting fed ex boxes that washed up along the shore. He makes some shoes. He walks up the mountain. He looks around, and he sees the little bit of sand he landed upon was

all there was to the shore. From a dead body, he picks up a flashlight and shoes. He finds a volleyball, ice skates, a dress, He discovers creative uses for these items, using the ice skates for a knife, and so on. However, he keeps back one Fed Ex box. Someday, he wants to deliver that box to its proper destination. In the end, after four years of being alone on the island, he constructs a raft and puts out onto the ocean. A ship rescues him. He delivers the package, saying that the commitment to deliver that package saved his life.

## **Jesus – 2000 Movie**

*Jesus* is a 2000 movie with Jeremy Sisto starring as Jesus and Jacqueline Bisset as Mary. He was a poor carpenter who never traveled further than 50 miles from his home and died at the age of 33, but his teachings changed the world. Two thousand years after his death, millions of people follow him from around the world. *Jesus*, originally produced as a television mini-series, offers a glimpse of the human side of the messiah, as well as recounting the story of his life and martyrdom. The home video release is expanded from the broadcast edition, featuring material that was cut for time purposes.

Some persons, looking for an exact presentation of the Gospel materials, will have disappointment. However, if one can relax, and not constantly wonder where they got that saying or action, one will hear the gospel message. In particular, the portrayal of the devil as a modern person is quite creative.

The film shows a joyful and emotional side of Jesus that so many films hold back. It shows him fully as a man, as well as the Christ. It shows him as a loving Christ, healing, teaching, and walking with lost and unimportant people. This drama traces the journey of Jesus from simple carpenter to spiritual leader, philosopher and martyr. It focuses on his compassionate teachings as well as his relationships with Mary, Joseph, his apostles, persecutors, and the heavenly father.

In one scene (1:20:30 to 1:24:37), religious leaders bring a woman caught in adultery to Jesus. Jesus is teaching. Moses commands us to stone such women, the man says, what do you say? Jesus responds, Let the one without sin, and cast the first stone. Everyone is stunned and leaves. Is there no one to condemn you? Then, neither do I condemn you. He helps her to stand. He tells her to go and sin no more. Afterward, Jesus sees a prostitute, and invites her to join him. She said she follows no one, for she is free. He says, “No, you are not free, but you could be.” As Jesus departs, she says, “You treated her like she was worth something.” He responds, “She is, and so are you.”

## **Diamonds – 2000 Movie**

*Diamonds* is a year 2000 movie. It runs 89 min. It received a PG-13 rating. It made \$82,000. It stars Kirk Douglas (Harry), Dan Aykroyd (Harry’s son Lance), Corbin Allred (Harry’s grandson Michael), and Lauren Bacall (Sin-Dee).

A former boxer suffers a stroke but proves himself a better fighter in his old age than he ever was in his youth.

As a demonstration of Kirk Douglas' heart and determination, the movie is inspiring. Douglas suffered a stroke years ago that left his speech impaired, a problem the film addresses directly by showing him, in his first scene, doing speech therapy with a

videotape. This therapy (or other therapy and a lot of determination) must have worked, because Douglas' speech is easily understandable (as clear, indeed, as Robert De Niro's stroke victim in "Flawless"). The Kirk Douglas personal style is unaffected: He was always one of the cocky, high-energy stars, the life force made lithe and springy. Here is the way Roger Ebert, who disliked the movie intensely, described his only meeting with Kirk Douglas.

But tribute must be paid to Kirk Douglas. I remember meeting him over several days in 1969, while writing a profile for Esquire magazine. I was almost bowled over by his energy, his zest for life, his superb physical condition. He could hardly sit still. He bounded from his chair to the side of a desk to a yoga position on the floor, talking rapid-fire about his career and hopes, and I have never forgotten what determination and joy he seemed to gather into every day of living.

Harry believes it is time for his old man to give up his independence and move into a retirement home. Nothing doing, says Harry, playing a former boxing champion who still likes to duke it out (there are flashbacks of Douglas in the ring, lifted from his 1949 film "Champion"). He wants to live independently, and tells his son and grandson about some diamonds that he was given decades ago to throw a fight in Reno. The diamonds are still hidden inside the walls of the house of a man named Duff the Muff, he says, and they should all three go to Nevada and recover them.

The men travel south from Canada in the obligatory vintage convertible, its top down to make it easier to shoot all three passengers. Harry might get pneumonia in the winter weather, but nobody thinks of that--and besides, the old guy is feisty enough to get smart with the border guards. In Nevada, when their diamond search experiences a setback, they all end up at a brothel, where the young grandson draws Jenny McCarthy and Harry gets the warmhearted madam, who seems right at home as the nurturing angel.

In one scene (1:00:18 to 1:01:42) Sin-Dee says, "Were you married long?" Harry says, "45 years." "45 years with one special person? You were lucky." Harry says, "She's still here," as he points to his heart." "Well, after 45 years, I would hope so. Would she mind your being here?" "Ellie just wanted me to be happy." She comments on his strong hands. "That's how I made my living. Once made they were made of stone." She says, "Now they are made of flesh and blood with stories that make up a full life." He says, "And the story's over." She responds, "No. I see dreams unrealized. I see darkness and light, a lot of love and a little bit of fright." He says, "You know, I think these hands," as he holds her hands, "would tell a better story." After she tells her story to him, they end in a slow dance.

In another scene (1:06:15 to 1:08:51), Sin-Dee discovers that Harry had his stroke after his wife died. She says that must have been hard. "Well, at the beginning I couldn't talk. I started to say something, and I babbled like a baby, and my mount was drooping. Grotesque. I didn't want to see anybody. I didn't want anybody to see me. I just went into my room, closed the blinds, crawled into bed, and cried and cried and cried." She asks, "Do you still cry?" "Sometimes, when the sun goes down. But, I'm here," as he raises his fists in victory. "You're a very brave man," she says. "Brave? I'm a pussycat. Ellie made me snap out of it. I remember her saying, 'Things can always be worse.' So I decided to

work on speech therapy cassettes.” She asks if he is scared, and he admits he is. “I am too,” she says. He says, “We hide it.”

## **For the Love of the Game – 1999 Movie**

*For Love of the Game* is an American film drama based on the novel of the same title by Michael Shaara. The movie runs 147 min. It received a PG-13 rating. Sam Raimi was the director. It stars Kevin Costner and Kelly Preston. The movie made \$35.1 million in America.

In every respect, this movie is a romance. It is a romance about a man and a woman, and it is a romance about baseball itself. The movie is about the mythology of baseball. Scratch beneath the surface of demanding fans and you will uncover a deep vein of honest sentimentality. Movies like this express big, real emotions that people may be reluctant to put into words. That is one thing Hollywood movies are supposed to do for us.

The Detroit Tigers baseball team travels to New York to play a season-ending series against the New York Yankees. The team is playing for nothing more than pride, but for 40-year-old pitcher and baseball legend Billy Chapel (Kevin Costner) this might end up being the most significant 24 hours of his life.

In his Manhattan hotel Billy awaits his on-and-off girlfriend Jane Aubrey (Kelly Preston). Jane never shows up. The next morning, she is in the lobby waiting for him, but Tigers owner Gary Wheeler (Brian Cox) shows up to tell Billy that he is selling the team. The new owner's first move will be to end Billy's 19-year tenure with the Tigers by trading him. Wheeler recommends to Billy that he retire.

Jane reveals to Billy that she has accepted a job offer in London, leaving that day. Reeling from these two developments, Billy shows up at Yankee Stadium to pitch. Jane's flight is delayed. She watches the game in a bar. Billy begins a recollection of Jane, detailing how they met five years prior when her car broke down.

He recalls good times and bad, like when he convinced Jane to come to spring training, only to have her discover Billy with another woman. With that pain fresh in his mind, Billy proceeds to strike out the side in the third inning, leaving his catcher Gus Sinski (John C. Reilly) to conclude that Billy is "in the zone."

Billy thinks back to a phone call from Jane revealing that she has a daughter named Heather (Jena Malone), who has run away to her father in Boston following an argument. Billy is in Boston and brings Heather back to New York to Jane. She and Billy resume their relationship.

Continuing to dominate the Yankees' batters, Billy focuses on how his relationship with Jane was strained when he suffered a career-threatening injury in the off-season. He also continues to feel the wear and tear his age and career are taking on his arm.

Billy is so distracted, it takes Gus to confirm in the eighth inning that no runner has reached base -- Billy is working on a perfect game. His best friend on the Yankees hits an apparent home run, but at the last second, the outfielder catches it.

Back at the airport, Jane cannot help but get caught up in the drama of the moment. She intentionally misses her flight to watch Billy's quest to make history, a perfect game being very rare.

A final flashback shows Billy in a California restaurant, where he has a chance encounter with Jane's daughter Heather, who tells him that she is attending college there. This prompts Billy to call her mother and invite her to dinner in New York. Jane accepts, but is already packing her bags for London.

Billy writes a few words on a baseball and instructs the team's trainer to have it delivered to Wheeler, the owner. It states Billy's intent to call it quits. Billy goes out to the mound for the last inning, three outs away from the perfect game. The final hitter is the son of one of Billy's ex-teammates. He makes an out and the game concludes with Billy being mobbed by his teammates.

In his hotel room, Billy breaks down and cries after checking his voicemail in hopes that Jane has left a message, only to find none. The next morning he goes to the airport to fly to London and find Jane. He is surprised to discover Jane in the airport, having rescheduled her flight. He says what happened to him was not the same without her there by his side. They embrace.

## Dogma – 1999 Movie

*Dogma* is a 1999 movie. Lions Gate Films Presents A Film Written And Directed By Kevin Smith. The Running Time of the movie is 125 Minutes. It received an R rating. It stars Bartleby: Ben Affleck; Loki: Matt Damon; Bethany: Linda Fiorentino; Jay: Jason Mewes; Silent Bob: Kevin Smith; Metatron: Alan Rickman; Rufus: Chris Rock; Serendipity: Salma Hayek. The film was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for Best Screenplay as well as a Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America honor for Best Screenplay.

Kevin Smith's "Dogma" grows out of an irreverent modern Catholic sensibility, a byproduct of parochial schools, where the underlying faith is taken seriously but the visible church is fair game for kidding. For those reared in such traditions, it is no reach at all to imagine two fallen angels finding a loophole to get back into heaven.

Of course, the faith itself does not depend on temporal rules, and "Dogma" knows it. Catholicism, like all religions, is founded on deeper mysteries than whether you will go to hell if you eat meat on Friday.

"Dogma" takes church teaching jokingly and very seriously indeed--both at the same time. It reflects a mentality some may be familiar with. (For example, it's a sin to harbor an impure thought, but how many seconds counts as harboring?)

Roger Ebert, who had a parochial education, said that he thinks a Catholic God might plausibly enjoy a movie like "Dogma," or at least understand the human impulses that made it, as he made them. ("He's lonely--but he's funny," an angel says in the movie.) After all, it takes Catholic theology absolutely literally, and in such detail that non-Catholics may need to be issued Catechisms on their way into the theater (not everybody knows what a plenary indulgence is). Sure, it contains many four-letter words, because it has characters that use them as punctuation. However, they are vulgarities, not blasphemies, venial, not mortal. Sure, it has a flawed prophet who never gives up trying to get into the heroine's pants, but even St. Augustine has been there, done that.

Two fallen angels – Bartleby (Affleck), who is a Grigori, and Loki (Damon), formerly the Angel of Death, were banished by God to spend all eternity in a place worse than Hell (namely Wisconsin). This occurred after Loki, who'd just slaughtered the first born in Egypt (The Tenth Plague), had gotten drunk and was convinced by Bartleby to resign as the Angel of Death. He renounced God and left Heaven, flipping Him off on the way out, thus costing their entitlement to eternal paradise; they were condemned not to go to hell, but to spend eternity outside of Heaven's gates. Azrael (Lee), a demon (and fallen muse) with a hidden agenda, secretly sends the duo a newspaper article about a church in New Jersey where a Cardinal (Carlin) has declared a blanket amnesty in the form of a plenary indulgence (a perennial misunderstanding of the term). He also initiated a contemporary Catholic image campaign--"Catholicism Wow!" with the 'happier' savior: Buddy Christ! --in celebration of the centennial anniversary of his church. This blanket forgiveness would allow Bartleby and Loki to be removed of all sin and allow them entry into Heaven.

However, amnesty for these fallen angels would necessarily constitute overruling the word of God (Alanis Morissette in a cameo role). And, as explained in the movie, the fundamental basis of creation in all forms is the principle of God's infallibility (in other words, what He says that is going to happen will, and that He is always correct). That means that since Bartleby and Loki were banished eternally from Heaven, their return to it would subvert God's word; the result would be not just the end of the world, but the annihilation of all creation.

The angel Metatron (Rickman), the Seraph who acts as the Voice of God, appears to abortion clinic worker Bethany (Fiorentino) and gives her the job of preventing Bartleby and Loki's return. At first she is reluctant, but changes her tune after she is attacked by three teenagers (who were sent to Hell for bashing in a baby's skull to see what it looked like) under the command of Azrael. She is aided by Rufus (Rock), the thirteenth apostle who was left out of the Bible because he was black; Serendipity (Hayek), a writers-blocked muse turned stripper; and the prophets Jay and Silent Bob (Mewes and Smith). Along the way to New Jersey she finds out that she is the Last Scion, the last living descendant of Mary and Joseph, and thus the last living relative of Jesus Christ.

The angels reach the church. Bartleby, who has 'snapped' from the pain of not being in heaven and being cast aside by God, goes on a killing spree. Loki cuts off his wings and starts drinking. Azrael is killed by Silent Bob with the Cardinal's blessed golf club (a driver). Bartleby kills Loki. Bethany releases God from a body called John Doe Jersey, but dies. After God takes care of Bartleby, she cleans up the burning vehicles and smashed bodies from the church. She also brings Bethany back to life, and just before the non-humans go back to heaven, Bethany finds out she is miraculously pregnant with the next generation of Jesus' descendants.

The major theme of the film is about modern people regaining their faith in God, and the danger in faith being confused with dogma. The film also is critical of the usage of religion to justify greed, war, racism, and homophobia. It also states that Heaven is for everyone, not just one religion, and that a person's race, religion, sexuality, and upbringing will not condemn him/her to eternal damnation, as long as s/he is a purehearted, good person (according to Bartleby this is no easy task).



Roger Ebert says that there is a long tradition that commercial American movies challenge conventional piety at great risk. For a long time, any movie dealing with religion had to be run past Hollywood's resident Monsignors, ministers and rabbis for approval (the habits of actual orders of nuns could not even be portrayed, which led to great ingenuity in the costume department). On the other hand, nobody has any problem with a movie that treats spiritual matters on the level of the supernatural. This has led to an emerging anti-religion based on magic, ghosts, reincarnation, mediums and other new age voodoo. Talk shows allow "psychics" to answer your questions over the phone, but God forbid they would put on a clergyman to supply thoughtful spiritual advice. And if a movie dares to deal with what people actually believe, all hell, so to speak, breaks loose.

For Ebert, Kevin Smith has made a movie that reflects the spirit in which many Catholics regard their church. He has positioned his comedy on the balance line between theological rigidity and secular reality, which is where so many Catholics find themselves. He deals with eternal questions in terms of flawed characters who live now, today, in an imperfect world.

Those whose approach to religion is spiritual will have little trouble with "Dogma," because they will understand the characters as imperfect, sincere, clumsy seekers trying to do the right thing. Those who see religion more as a team, a club, a hobby or a pressure group are going to be upset. This movie takes theological matters out of the hands of "spokesmen" and entrusts them to--well, the unwashed. And goes so far as to suggest that God loves them. And is a Canadian.

In one scene (1:50:56/1:57:19 to 1:58:00/1:59:40), God appears at the doors of the church. Bartleby hugs God, who is a her. An angel tells everyone to hold their ears. The voice of God kills Bartleby. Jay keeps saying, "What the fuck." He looks into the eyes of God, and passes out. Silent Bob brings Bethany back, dead. However, God comes back. She lays her hands on Bethany and brings her back to life. "She can make you better, stronger, and faster." Bethany says there are many things she would like to say, such as questioning your great plan, but that would be arrogant of me, I know. Bethany then says to God "Why are we here?" God points at her right eye, gives a sound, smiles, turns, and leaves.

#### Quotes

Liz: You need to get laid, Bethany Sloane, you need a man, even if only for ten minutes.

Bethany: It has been my experience that the average male is never a man in his whole life, even for ten minutes.

Liz: That sounds a little bit militant. Are you thinking of joining the other side?

Bethany: Couldn't do it. Women are insane.

Liz: Then you need to go back to church and ask God for a third option.

Bethany: I think God is dead.

Liz: The sign of a true Catholic.

Metatron: Do you go around drenching everyone that comes into your room with flame-retardant chemicals? No wonder you're single!

Metatron: You don't mind I lost the wings, do you? I'm trying to keep our profile low.

Metatron: I am to charge you with a holy crusade.

Bethany: For the record, I work in an abortion clinic.

Metatron: Noah was a drunk. Look what he accomplished.

Metatron: So, one day Loki's wiping out all the firstborns of Egypt...

Bethany: Ah, the tenth plague...

Metatron: Tell a person that you're the Metatron and they stare at you blankly; mention something out of a Charlton Heston movie and suddenly everybody's a theology scholar! May I continue uninterrupted?

Loki: Mass genocide is the most exhausting activity anyone can engage in, next to soccer.

Rufus: So what do we do now?

Metatron: Well, I say we get drunk 'cause I'm all out of ideas!

Bartleby: You can't be anal retentive if you don't have an anus.

Glick: Fill them pews, people! Get some new ones as well! Hook 'em while they're young!

Rufus: Kind of like the tobacco industry?

Glick: Christ, if only we had their numbers!

Serendipity: You've got that Divine Heritage. Sanctifying things is just one of the fringe benefits.

Bethany: Remind me to try that "Water into Wine" thing at my next party.

Metatron: Anyone who isn't dead or from another plane of existence would do well to cover their ears, right about... now!

Bethany: Wait, Christ? You knew Christ?

Rufus: Knew him? Shit, nigga owes me 12 bucks!

Silent Bob: No ticket.

Jay: Yo man, tell me something about me.

Rufus: You masturbate more than anyone on the planet!

Jay: Aw, everyone knows that! Tell me something nobody knows!

Rufus: When you do it, you're thinking about guys.

Jay: (to a shocked Silent Bob): ...Dude, not all the time.

Silent Bob: Thanks.

## The Sixth Sense – 1999 Movie

*The Sixth Sense* is a 1999 movie. It received a PG-13 rating. It stars Bruce Willis as Malcom Crowe, Haley Joel Osment as Cole, and Toni Collette as Cole's mother. Its running time is 107 minutes. It earned in the USA \$293.5 million. M. Night Shyamalan received a best director nomination and best original screenplay. Haley received a best supporting actor nomination. Toni Collette received a nomination for best supporting actress. It received a nomination for best editing. It received a nomination for best picture. American Society of Cinematographers nominated it for cinematography. British Academy Awards nominated M. Night Shyamalan for best director and best screenplay, Best editing, Best Picture. M. Night Shyamalan received from the Directors Guild of America a nomination for best director of a feature film. Boston Globe gave M. Night Shyamalan a nomination for best director, best picture, and Haley a nomination for best supporting actor. Screen Actors Guild gave Haley best supporting male actor in a supporting role. Writers Guild nominated M. Night Shyamalan for best original screenplay.

A psychologist helps a young boy who has visions of dead people who wait for justice or peace due them after death. In the ghost story, one of the rules is that children are better than adults at seeing them. In this film, a small boy solemnly tells his psychologist, 'I see dead people. They want me to do things for them.'

Malcolm Crowe who is shot one night in his home by an intruder, a man who had been his patient years earlier and believes he was wrongly treated. The man then turns the gun on himself. "The next fall," as the subtitles tell us, we see Crowe mended in body but perhaps not in spirit, as he takes on a new case, a boy named Cole Sear (Haley Joel Osment) who exhibits some of the same problems as the patient who shot at him. Maybe this time he can get it right.

The film shows us things adults do not see. When Cole's mother leaves the kitchen for just a second and comes back in the room, all of the doors and drawers are open. At school, he tells his teacher "they used to hang people here." When the teacher wonders how Cole could possibly know things like that, he helpfully tells him, "When you were a boy they called you Stuttering Stanley." It is Crowe's task to reach this boy and heal him, if healing is what he needs. Perhaps he is calling for help; he knows the Latin for "from out of the depths I cry into you, oh Lord!" Crowe does not necessarily believe the boy's stories, but Crowe himself is suffering, in part because his wife, once so close, now seems to be drifting into an affair and does not seem to hear him when he talks to her. The boy tells him, "Talk to her when she's asleep. That's when she'll hear you." Using an "as if" approach to therapy, Crowe asks Cole, "What do you think the dead people are trying to tell you?" This is an excellent question, seldom asked in ghost stories, where the heroes are usually so egocentric they think the ghosts have gone to all the trouble of appearing simply so they can see them. Cole has some ideas. Crowe wonders whether the ideas are not sound even if there are not really ghosts.

In one scene (47:49 to 50:29), Cole asks as Malcom to tell him a story about why he is said. "Once upon a time, there was this man named Malcom. He worked with children. He loved it. He loved it more than anything else. And then one night he found that he made a mistake with one of them. He made mistake, a really bad one. He could not help that one. He cannot forget. Ever since then, things have been different. He does not like what he has become. His wife and him hardly ever speak. They are like strangers.

Then, Malcom meets another little boy, a really cool little boy. Reminds him a lot of the other one. And Malcom decides to try to help this new boy, 'cause he feels that if he can help this new boy, it will be like helping the other one too." "How does the story end?" "I don't know." "I wanna tell you my secret now." "Okay." "I see dead people." He sees them while awake. They walk around, not knowing they are dead. He sees them all the time.

In another scene (1:34:00 to 1:36:08), Cole gives his mom a message from her mother that finally gives her peace. She is sorry that she missed his play, but she has two jobs. "I am ready to communicate with you now." "Communicate?" "Tell you my secrets." ... "Grandma says hi. She says she is sorry for taking the bumblebee penant. She just likes it a lot." "What?" "Grandma comes to visit me sometimes." "Cole, that's very wrong. Grandma's gone, you know that. "I know." "She wanted me to tell you." "Cole, please stop." "She wanted me to tell you she saw you dance. She said when you were little, you and her had a fight right before your dance recital. You thought she didn't come to see you dance. She did. She hid in the back so you wouldn't see. She said you were like an angel. She said you came to the place where they buried her, and you asked her a question. She said the answer is, 'every day.' What did you ask?" "Do I make her proud?"

In another scene (1:40:30 to 1:42:08), Malcom says at the end of the movie to his wife, "I think I can go now. I just needed to do a couple things. I needed to help someone, and I did. And I needed to tell you something. You never second. Ever. I love you. You sleep now. Everything will be different in the morning." "Good night, Malcom." "Good night, sweetheart."

## Office Space – 1999 Movie

*Office Space* is a 1999 movie. It received an R rating. The movie made \$10.8 million in the USA. It stars Ron Livingston and Jennifer Anniston.

Mike Judge's "*Office Space*" is a comic cry of rage against the nightmare of modern office life. It is about work that crushes the spirit. Office cubicles are cells, supervisors are the wardens, and modern management theory is skewed to employ as many managers and as few workers as possible.

As the movie opens, a cubicle slave named Peter (Ron Livingston) is being reminded by his smarmy supervisor (Gary Cole) that all reports now carry a cover sheet. "Yes, I know," he says. "I forgot. It was a silly mistake. It won't happen again." Before long another manager reminds him about the cover sheets. "Yes, I know," he says. Then another manager. And another. Logic suggests that when more than one supervisor conveys the same trivial information, their jobs overlap, and all supervisors after the first one should be shredded.

Peter hates his job. So do all of his co-workers, although one of them, Milton, has found refuge through an obsessive defense of his cubicle, his radio and his stapler. Milton's cubicle is relocated so many times that eventually it appears to have no entrance or exit; he's walled-in on every side.

Mike Judge, the writer, uses Orwellian satirical techniques to fight the cubicle police: No individual detail of office routine is too absurd to be believed, but together they add up to stark, staring insanity.

Peter has two friends at work: Michael Bolton and Samir. No, not that Michael Bolton, Michael patiently explains. They flee the office for coffee breaks (demonstrating that Starbucks doesn't really sell coffee--it sells escape from the office).

Peter is in love with the waitress at the chain restaurant across the parking lot. Her name is Joanna and she has problems with management, too. She's required to wear a minimum of 15 funny buttons on the suspenders of her uniform; the buttons are called "flair" in company lingo, and her manager suggests that wearing only the minimum flair suggests the wrong spirit (another waiter has "45 flairs" and looks like an exhibit at a trivia convention).

Consider Michael Bolton's plan for revenge against the company. He has a software program that would round off payments to the next-lowest penny and deposit the proceeds in their checking account. Hey, you're thinking--that's not original! A dumb movie would pretend it was.

Not "Office Space," where Peter says he thinks he's heard of that before, and Michael says, "Yeah, they did it in 'Superman III.' Also, a bunch of hackers tried it in the '70s. One got arrested." The movie's turning point comes when Peter seeks help from an "occupational hypnotherapist." He's put in a trance with long-lasting results; he cuts work, goes fishing, guts fish at his desk and tells efficiency experts he actually works only 15 minutes a week. The experts like his attitude and suggest he be promoted. Meanwhile, the Milton problem is ticking like a time bomb, especially after Milton's cubicle is relocated to a basement storage area.

"Office Space" suggests that regular employment is even worse than being a temp, because it's a life sentence. Asked to describe his state of mind to the therapist, Peter says, "Since I started working, every single day has been worse than the day before, so that every day you see me is the worst day of my life."

There is a moment in the movie 55:08 to 57:08 when the heroes take a baseball bat to a malfunctioning copier. Reader, who has not felt the same? The co-workers leave their company, stealing the printer that has bugged them periodically throughout the movie. In the background is rap music using the f-word. The co-workers take great joy in beating up the printer – violently.

## **Being John Malkovich – 1999 Movie**

*Being John Malkovich* is a 1999 movie. It received an R rating. It runs 112 minutes. It made \$22.8 million. It stars John Cusack (Craig), Cameron Diaz (Lotte), Catherine Keener (Maxine, best supporting actress nomination), and John Malkovich (John Horatio Malkovich). Director Spike Jonze received a nomination for best director. Writer Charlie Kaufman received a nomination for best original screenplay and won the award from the British Academy and Chicago Film Critics Association and Independent Spirit Award and L. A. Film Critics Association.

This movie is strange. It requires some attention to the odd turns it takes.

Craig is a street puppeteer. His puppets are dark and neurotic creatures, and the public does not much like them. Craig's wife, Lotte, runs a pet store, and their home is overrun with animal boarders, most of them deeply disturbed. The puppeteer cannot make ends meet in "today's wintry job climate." He answers a help-wanted ad and finds himself on floor 7 1/2 of a building. It makes everything that happens on it funny in an

additional way, on top of why it's funny in the first place. The floor is merely the backdrop for more astonishment. Craig meets a co-worker named Maxine and lusts for her. She asks, "Are you married?" He says, "Yeah, but enough about me." They go out for a drink. He says, "I'm a puppeteer." She says, "Waiter? Check, please."

Behind a filing cabinet on the 7 1/2th floor, Craig finds a small doorway. He crawls through it, and is whisked through some kind of temporal-spatial portal, ending up inside the brain of the actor John Malkovich. Here he stays for exactly 15 minutes, before falling from the sky next to the New Jersey Turnpike. Whoa! What an experience. Maxine pressures him to turn it into a business, charging people to spend their 15 minutes inside Malkovich. The movie handles this not as a gimmick but as the opportunity for material that is somehow funny and serious, sad and satirical, weird and touching, all at once. Malkovich himself is part of the magic. He is not playing himself here, but a version of his public image--distant, quiet, droll, as if musing about things that happened long ago and were only mildly interesting at the time.

Why are people so eager to enter his brain? For the novelty, above all. Spend a lifetime being yourself and it would be worth money to spend 15 minutes being almost anybody else. At one point, there is a bit of a traffic jam. Lotte finds herself inside his mind while Maxine is seducing him. Lotte enjoys this experience and decides she wants to become a lesbian, or a man. Whatever it takes. This is hard to explain, but it seems to work for most watchers of this film.

At one point Malkovich enters himself through his own portal, which is kind of like being pulled down into the black hole of your own personality. Roger Ebert says this scene represents one of the most peculiar scenes he has ever seen in the movies.

8:33 to 14:42 Craig enters an office building with impossibly low ceilings. He sees a video that explains why the ceilings are so low. The original builder, it says, wanted a place where his short of stature wife would feel at home. Now, it has become a place where businesses can cut corners because of "low overhead."

## **The Truman Show – 1998 Movie**

*The Truman Show* is a 1998 drama and comedy. It runs 102 min. It received a PG rating. It made \$125.5 million in the United States. Paul Weir received a nomination for best director and Andrew Nicol received a nomination for best screenplay from the academy and from the Director's Guild. Burkhard Dallwitz won best original score from Chicago Film Critics Association and from Golden Globe. It stars Jim Carrey (won best actor from Golden Globe) as Truman, Laura Linney as Meryl, Noah Emmerich as Marlon, Natascha McElhone as Lauren/Sylvia, Holland Taylor as mother, and Ed Harris (nominated for best supporting actor with Academy, won with Golden Globe and National Board of Review) as Christof.

A young man discovers his whole world is fake, that a television tycoon adopted him, and that his whole life is on TV, 24/7. Actually, the imaginary ideal world is Seaside, a planned community on the Gulf Coast near Tampa. Called Seahaven in the movie, it looks like a nice place to live. Certainly, Truman Burbank does not know anything else. You accept the world you are given, the filmmakers suggest; viewers that are more thoughtful will get the buried message, which is that we accept almost everything in our lives without examining it very closely. When was the last time you

reflected on how really odd a tree looks? Truman works as a sales executive at an insurance company, is happily married to Meryl, and does not find it suspicious that she describes household products in the language of TV commercials. He is happy, in a way, but uneasiness gnaws away at him. Something is missing, and he thinks that perhaps he might find it in Fiji, where Lauren, the only woman he really loved, allegedly has moved with her family. Why did she leave so quickly? She may not have been a safe bet for Truman's world. The actress who played her (named Sylvia) developed real feeling and pity for Truman, and felt he should know the truth about his existence. Meryl, on the other hand, is a reliable pro (which raises the question, unanswered, of their sex life).

A TV producer named Christof, whose control room is high in the artificial dome that provides the sky and horizon of Seahaven, controls Truman's world. He discusses his programming on talk shows, and dismisses the protests of those (including Sylvia) who believe Truman is the victim of a cruel deception. Meanwhile, the whole world watches every move of Truman, and some viewers even leave the TV on all night, as he sleeps.

Truman must gradually realize the truth of his environment, and tries to escape from it. It is clever the way he is kept on his island by implanted traumas about travel and water.

In one scene, (53:00 to 55:20, with a few "hell" statements in the conversation) Truman (True-man) tries to have an honest conversation about life with his wife, Meryl. She thinks he needs help. "Why do you want to have a baby with me? You hate me." "That is not true, Truman." She turns around, finds a box that serves as a placement ad, and she starts talking like an advertisement about a cocoa drink made from cocoa beans from Nicaragua. Truman asks to whom she is talking. She continues with her advertisement that it is the best drink ever. Truman continues to wonder: What is happening? She says he is having a nervous breakdown. She picks up knives, and says he is scaring her. He says she is scaring him. He grabs her and holds her around the neck. She looks up into the ceiling camera, "Do something." "What? Who are you talking to?" Finally, his friend knocks on the door, and the tension lessens, but she says, "How can you expect me to go on under these conditions?"

In the end (1:32:00 to 1:33:14) Truman finds the door out of his TV world. Christoph wants to talk to him before he leaves. "Who are you?" "I am the creator ... of a TV show that gives hope to millions." "Who am I?" "You are the star." "Was nothing real?" "You were real. That's what made you so good to watch. Listen to me, Truman. There's no more truth out there than there is in the world I created for you. The same lies, the same deceit. But in my world, you have nothing to fear. I know you better than you know yourself." In the end, Christoph does not know him as well as he thought. Truman will leave to find a new life for himself, apart from television.

As the story unfolds, we are not simply expected to follow it. We are invited to think about the implications. What if our taste for trivia and voyeurism led to the purgatory of a whole life lived as show-biz illusion? What if that life became not only the ultimate paranoid fantasy but also achieved pulse-quickenning heights of narcissism? 'We accept the reality of the world with which we're presented; it's as simple as that,' intones Christof. The story's central notions really are that simple. People would rather live vicariously through inane action movies and frivolous TV sitcoms than meet their own lives head-on. Modern communications make celebrity possible as well as inhuman. Until fairly recently, the only way you could become really famous was to be royalty, or

a writer, actor, preacher or politician--and even then, most people had knowledge of you only through words or printed pictures. Television, with its insatiable hunger for material, has made celebrities into ``content," devouring their lives and secrets. We might think of the way the media has eroded any separation between our public and private lives and the sponge like nature of media, how it absorbs everything that encounters it, recasting and simplifying experience into commodity. The captive of TV is not Truman; it is the audience. Us. Our love of that captivity, the gobbling of shows -- fictional drama or news or sports or politics, but always shows -- engulfs us.

## **Ever After: A Cinderella Story – 1998 Movie**

*Ever After: A Cinderella Story* is a 1998 movie starring Drew Barrymore as Danielle, Angelica Huston as Rodmilla and Dougray Scott as Prince Henry. It has several surprises in what purports to be the true story of Cinderella. The old story still has passion in it. Drew Barrymore shows she has a marvelous screen presence. The movie takes place in 16th century Europe, although it is a Europe more like a theme park than a real place, and that accounts for Danielle's remarkable ability to encounter the rich and famous--not only Prince Henry of France, but even Leonardo da Vinci, who functions as sort of a fairy godfather. It is a Europe of remarkable beauty (magnificent castles and chateaus are used as locations), in which a girl with spunk and luck has a chance even against a wicked stepmother. She puts Danielle to work as the family maid--swabbing floors, cooking and doing the dishes, tending the barnyard. Meanwhile, she grooms the beautiful Jacqueline for marriage in high places. However, Rodmilla sometimes allows herself sympathy for Danielle; it is not that she is cruel to the girl so much as she must look out for her own daughters. The older woman has had problems of her own. ``Did you love my father?" Danielle asks her. Rodmilla conceals much in her answer: ``I barely knew him. Now, go away--I'm tired."

Danielle's entry into the life of Prince Henry occurs through a series of coincidental encounters, after a Meet Cute in which she bops him with an apple. There is a false crisis, after Danielle pretends to be a countess (but only to help a friend), and Henry falls in love with her. She is afraid that when her masquerade is exposed, he will scorn her, and she is very nearly right, but Danielle's attitude toward her dilemma is closer to modern feminism than to the cheerful sexism of the Brothers Grimm.

In one scene (1:32:07 to 1:54), the stepmother exposes Danielle as an imposter at the ball at which the Prince was to designate his wife. The stepmother says she is a servant in her home. The Prince cannot believe it to be true. She wants to explain. "I have heard enough." "I am the Prince of France, and you are just like them," he says. Danielle runs away from the palace. As the Prince is alone, Leonardo da Vinci tells the Prince that she is his match, and that a life without love is a life not worth living. The Prince says that he will not yield. Leonardo then says that the Prince does not deserve her. The stepmother sells Danielle to the bad man in the movie, La Pierre. At the wedding, his Spanish bride cries at the altar, because she was in love someone else in the room. The Prince finally laughs, says, "I know exactly what you mean," and goes off to find Danielle. He discovers who has bought her. The Prince hurries to find her. However, Danielle has already escaped from her captor. What are you doing here, she says to the Prince. I am here to save you, she says. Save me, she asks. The Prince kneels before her,



not as a king, but as a man, who wants her to be his wife. They hug. When Danielle meets her stepmother again, she is the queen. “Your majesties, all I ask is that she be shown the same courtesy that she showed me.” In the end, the stepmother and Marguerite are banished to the laundry.

## **At First Sight – 1998 Movie**

*At First Sight* is a 1998 movie starring Val Kilmer playing Virgil and Mira Sorvino playing Amy. Virgil is a blind masseuse who is able to take care of himself; Amy is a young woman who wants to help him see again. In one scene, (The Scene 1:36:27 to 1:37:40) Virgil and Amy go ice-skating after Virgil has surgery and can see again temporarily. He does not understand body language. A girl passes him, giving him a flirting look. Virgil wonders what the look he saw in Amy’s face meant. She says it was probably a jealous look. Then she says, “Do you want to see my other looks?” She then goes through a rather humorous series of looks. “This is what sad looks like. Here is jubilation. This is terrible fear. This is extreme suspicion.” Then she gives a series of looks that she does not interpret. Finally, she says, “This is I love you.” Of course, Virgil then says, “This look, I love.”

## **Les Miserables – 1998 Movie**

*Les Miserables* is a 1998 movie starring Liam Neeson, Geoffrey Rush, and Uma Thurman. It tells the story of a man who escapes from prison after being unjustly arrested in 18th-century France for stealing bread when he was starving. In his bitterness, he steals from those who are kind to him and gets a new chance to live in righteousness. The movie is a dutiful adaptation of the 1862 novel by Victor Hugo (1802 – 1885).

In an early scene (4:13 to 9:52), Jean Valjean eats with the bishop. The wife of the bishop asks what crime he committed. “Maybe I killed someone.” He asks how they know he will not kill them. The bishop asks how he knows the bishop will not kill him. “Is that a joke?” The bishop says, “I guess we will just have to trust each other.” The bishop and wife discover that he was in prison because he stole a loaf of bread due to hunger 19 years ago, and has been in prison ever since. He has a yellow passport, which identifies him as dangerous. “Now, the real punishment begins.” The bishop says that people can be unjust. Jean Valjean says, “People? Not God?” He thanks them for the meal and bed, “And in the morning, I’ll be a new man.” He dreams (5:44 to 6:16) of his treatment in prison. He gets up early and steals the silverware. The bishop awakens. Jean Valjean hits him and knocks him out. The French soldiers catch him and arrest him. The bishop wonders why he did not take the candlesticks as well. “And don’t forget. You promised to become a new man.” Jean Valjean wonders why the bishop is doing this. In one of the most famous episodes from Hugo's novel, the bishop tells the police he gave the tramp the silver, and later tells Valjean: “Jean Valjean, my brother, you no longer belong to evil. With this silver, I have bought your soul. I've ransomed you from fear and hatred and now I give you back to God.”

Valjean sells the silver, gets a job in a provincial factory and uses the nest egg to buy the factory. As we rejoin him some years later, he is the local mayor, respectable and beloved, trying to teach himself to read and write. Then fate re-enters his life in the

person of Inspector Javert (Geoffrey Rush), a police official who recognizes him from his years at hard labor and wants to expose him: In this world, if you once do something wrong, you are banished forever from the sight of those lucky enough not to have been caught. Javert does not believe in the possibility of reform.

Consider, in the same light, poor Fantine (Uma Thurman), fired from the factory and forced into prostitution because it is discovered she has a child out of wedlock. Valjean discovers her plight (he was unaware of the firing), nurses her through a fatal illness and promises to care for the child.

With the unyielding Javert forever at his back, Valjean takes his money and flees to Paris, taking refuge in a convent he had once (foresightedly) given money to. There he and the child, Cosette, spend 10 years. Then Cosette, now a young woman played by Claire Danes, yearns for freedom; Valjean, against his better wishes, takes a house for them. Cosette falls for the fiery radical Marius (Hans Matheson), who is being tailed by the police, which puts Javert once more onto the trail of poor Valjean.

Javert is the kind of man who can say with his dying breath, "I've tried to lead my life without breaking a single rule." He means it, and will never cease his pursuit of Valjean, even though the other man, as mayor, spared his job: "I order you to forgive yourself." As Javert pursues his vendetta against a man who has become kind and useful, Marius leads the mobs to the barricades.

When Cosette pleads with her father to leave the convent, she sounds more like a bored modern teenager than a survivor of murderous times. ("Don't leave the cab!" he tells her on their first venture into the world, so of course she immediately does.) Her father could of course settle all her objections with a few words of explanation, but in the great movie tradition of senselessly withholding crucial information, he refuses to.

## Everest – 1998 Documentary

*Everest* is a 1998 Imax documentary film about climbing Mount Everest. It was filmed during the infamous 1996 storm that claimed eight lives. It documents the filmmakers' harrowing rescue efforts to help surviving members of the ill-fated group. A surprise storm hits, resulting in tragedy and great heroism.

In one scene (24:09 to 25:29), climber Beck Weathers is left for dead by his team. "Just above the High Camp, a climber named Beck Weathers had been out in the storm for over 22 hours. He had been left for dead by other climbers, and then, nearly blind, his hands literally frozen solid, Beck stood up, left his pack, and desperately tried to walk. 'All I knew was that as long as my legs would run and I could stand up, I was gonna move toward that camp, and if I fell down, I was gonna get up. If I fell down again, I was gonna get up. And I was gonna keep movin' till I either hit that camp, or walked off the face of that mountain.' The narrator says Beck's teammates were certain he was lying dead in the snow, so they were pretty startled when he staggered into the High Camp. Beck's life hung by a thread, but Ed was determined to rescue him. Ed Viesturs says the camera team put down their gear and followed me up the mountain into the storm. We'd just lost Rob. We sure as hell weren't going to lose Beck too. He was so blind and so weak that we had to support him and physically place his feet in each step. Even with our help Beck just didn't have the strength to get through the icefall. His frostbitten hands would have to be amputated, so time was critical. We had to get him out of there soon.

## Ulee's Gold – 1997 Movie

*Ulee's Gold* is a 1997 movie. It is a drama. It received an R rating. It runs 113 min. Peter Fonda (Ulee, short for Ulysses, nominated for Oscar and Screen Actors Guild and won Golden Globe), Patricia Richardson (of Home Improvement, playing Connie Hope, nominated for best supporting actress in Independent Spirit award), Jessica Biel (Casey), Vanessa Zima (Penny Jackson), J Kenneth Campbell (the sheriff), and Christine Dunford (Helen Jackson). Victor Nunez received Independent Spirit Award for best screenplay and best director. The movie received a best picture nomination from the Independent Spirit Award. It made \$9 million in the USA.

It is easy to overlook this film, given all the hype that many movies receive. The movie is deceptively old-fashioned.

In the opening shots, we watch the title character, Ulee Jackson, carefully going about his job of beekeeping. He does everything tenderly and carefully, and he is alone in his work. Actually, he is alone in more than his work. Life's hardships have toughened him, and made him draw back from human contact. He rarely communicates with his son, Jimmy, who is in jail for bank robbery, and can barely connect with his two grandchildren, who he has reluctantly taken under his wing. He maintains a strong sense of family, but it seems to be more for keeping other people out than maintaining good relationships within.

The movie slowly shows how events beyond Ulee's power draw him out of his shell, and force him to become the savior of his family. A lonely, widowed beekeeper who is raising his two grandchildren while trying to forget a painful past. Ulee is a beekeeper in the Florida panhandle who has a lot on his mind. He was the only survivor of his Vietnam unit. His wife died six years ago. His son is in prison on a robbery charge, and he is bringing up his two granddaughters as best he can.

He is a very lonely man, but he loves his work: "The bees and I have an understanding." He has not spoken to his son Jimmy in two years, when one day a call comes. He goes to visit the boy in prison. The son asks for help: His wife, Helen, has turned up in bad shape, and is staying with Eddie and Ferris, the two people Jimmy pulled the robbery with. Jimmy wants Ulee to get Helen and take care of her. "She can just stay gone," Ulee says. "She's sick, Dad," says Jimmy. Therefore, Ulee drives his pickup truck down to where Ferris and Eddie are holed up in a flophouse with Helen, who is strung out on drugs and madness. He hauls Helen home, although not before the two men tell him they believe Jimmy hid \$100,000 from the robbery, and they want it back--or they will come after the grandchildren.

A woman named Connie lives across the street from Ulee. She is a nurse, divorced twice, no children. The granddaughters like her, and when they see the shape their mother is in, they drag her across the street to help. Helen needs a lot of help. Sedatives, restraints, the whole detox process. Ulee tries to thank Connie. "It's what I do," she says.

The scenes between Ulee and Connie are charged with quiet tension. Obviously, she likes him. He tells her he is no longer good at--well, getting along with people. She understands. What happens between them happens slowly and tactfully.

A situation late in this film involves a gun, and Ulee handles it like a chessmaster, figuring out what the real threat is, and how his opponents will react. Raised on routine movies, we figure Ulee will grab for the gun. Ulee is smarter and deeper than that.

As Roger Ebert comments, the elements are in place here for a fairly standard story in which Ferris and Eddie come looking for the money, and Ulee must defend his family, while falling in love, of course, with Connie--while the girls bond once again with their mother. Nevertheless, to look at events in that way would miss the whole purpose of "Ulee's Gold," which is not about who prevails, but about what Ulee learns about himself.

Family is what "Ulee's Gold" is ultimately about. In a time when the notion of family is increasingly being beaten down in the name of personal gain and political correctness, this film stands up and declares that salvation lies in our ability to support and love each other, through the good times and the bad. It also draws a strong line between people who are fundamentally mean (Eddie and Ferris), and those who are basically good people, but just get a little side-tracked on life's road (Jimmy and Helen). The film does not preach, and it does not pretend that the bad times do not wear you down. Nevertheless, it shows that there is always a light at the end of the tunnel, and if there is even one spark of hope in the darkness, not all is lost.

This is a realistic look at a family in need of a second chance on life, with Peter Fonda coming up with his finest performance ever. The bad situation forces Ulee to get in touch with his softer side and find redemption for himself and forgiveness for others who are still too weak to fend for themselves.

We learn something about bees, and a lot about beekeepers, but "Ulee's Gold" is not a documentary; all of the information is used in the story, especially in a scene where one of the granddaughters uses bees in a parable she tells her mother. Basically, it comes down to: You take care of them, and they'll take care of you. In one scene (1:06:48 to 1:07:52), Penny tells her mother, with Ulee listening in, "See, sometimes the bees get confused, and run away — that's them there on the tree. But they don't really want to be gone, and they're happy when someone helps them back into their home. But you got to keep calm and don't panic when they sting, 'cause they don't mean nothing by it." She has drawn a picture of Ulee going to the swamp to get the bees.

Here are other some memorable quotes.

Ulee: The bees and I have an understanding. I take care of them, and they take care of me.

Ulee: You'll pay for the rest of your life for being a jackass. Casey: Yeah, well, it's better than dying of boredom.

Connie: Me, I'm divorced twice. No kids, fortunately. I guess, fortunately.

Ulee: We don't ask outsiders for help.

Connie: You are almost a good man, Ulee Jackson, but you try too hard.

Ulee: There's all kinds of weakness in the world, not all of it is evil. I forget that from time to time.

## **Amistad – 1997 Movie**

*Amistad* is a 1997 movie. The title of the film derives from the slave ship, which in Spanish means "friendship." Morgan Freeman played the abolitionist Theodore

Joadson, Anthony Hopkins played John Quincy Adams, Matthew McConaughey played Baldwin, and Nigel Hawthorn played Martin Van Buren. It received an R rating, due to scenes of slavery and brutality. It runs 145 minutes long. The basis is the true story of captured Africans who lead a revolt at sea in 1839, but are recaptured, and then tried in the United States as fugitive slaves. The movie made \$44.1 million in the USA. In the Academy Awards, it received several nominations: Best Cinematography, Best costume design, John Williams for Best Dramatic Score, and Anthony Hopkins for best support actor. In other awards, the American Society of Cinematographers nominated it for best cinematography. Anthony Hopkins won as best supporting actor with the Broadcast Film Critics Association. Directors Guild nominated Steven Spielberg for best director. Golden Globe nominated Djimon Hounsou as best actor in a dramatic role, Steven Spielberg as best director, the movie as best dramatic picture, and Anthony Hopkins as best supporting actor. Screen Actors Guild nominated Anthony Hopkins for best supporting actor. Spielberg said he based the movie on the book, William A. Owens, *Black Mutiny: The Revolt on the Schooner Amistad*. The writer of the screenplay was David Franzoni.

By the way, the film shows Van Buren making a whistle-stop campaign for re-election. This is an anachronism; the nation's railway network had not sufficiently advanced yet in 1840 to allow such a tactic. It was also considered undignified for candidates to actively seek the presidency. Van Buren and his opponent, William Henry Harrison, allowed subordinates to do the work.

The film opens on the ship Amistad, where Cinque is able to free himself from shackles and release his fellow prisoners. They rise up against the Spanish crew of the ship, which is taking them from a Havana slave market to another destination in Cuba. The two men who bought them are spared, and promise to guide the ship back to Africa. However, they guide it instead into U.S. waters, and the Africans find themselves in an American court.

In 1839, seven of the nine U.S. Supreme Court justices in 1839 were slave-owning Southerners. The film centers on the legal status of Africans who rise up against their captors on the high seas and are brought to trial in a New England court. Slavery itself is not the issue. Instead, the court must decide whether the defendants were born of slaves (in which case they are guilty of murder) or were illegally brought from Africa (and therefore had a right to defend themselves against kidnapping). This legal distinction is not made as clear as it could have been; the international slave trade had been outlawed by treaties by 1839, the year of the landmark Amistad incident, but those who were already slaves remained the property of their masters--as did their children. The moral hair-splitting underlying that distinction is truly depraved, but on it depends the defense of Cinque, the leader of the Africans, and his fellow mutineers.

Luckily, it is a Northern court, or they would have little chance at all. They are unlucky at first with their defense team, which is led by Roger Baldwin, a real estate lawyer who bases his case on property law and only slowly comes to see his clients as human beings. Two Boston abolitionists, a former slave named Joadson and an immigrant named Tappan support the cause. Eventually, on appeal, former President John Quincy Adams argues eloquently for the freedom of the men. At the time, President Martin Van Buren was afraid of John Calhoun, a senator from the south, for his own personal re-election, made a wrong decision and did not free the slaves

In the view of Roger Ebert, the moments of greatest emotion occur outside the main story. They include a horrifying scene in Chapter 11 where, with food running low on the ship, the weaker captives are chained together and thrown over the side to drown so that more food will be left for the rest. And another sequence in Chapter 11, in which the mechanics of the slave trade are examined, as Africans capture members of enemy tribes and sell them to slave traders. In Chapter 13, Cinque rises in the courtroom to say, "Give us free!" A scene where Cinque sees African violets in John Quincy Adams' greenhouse and is seized with homesickness. One might lastly refer to Cinque's memory of his wife left in Africa. In the end, Cinque will return to Sierra Leone, discovering his tribe decimated by a Civil War of its own. Queen Isabella would continue to bring up the Amistad case to seven Presidents, desiring compensation for Spanish losses.

What is most valuable about "Amistad" is the way it provides faces and names for its African characters, whom the movies so often make into faceless victims. The captive called Cinque emerges as a powerful individual, a once-free farmer who has lost his wife and family. We see his wife, and his village, and something of his life; we understand how cruelly he was ripped from his life and ambitions. (Since it was the policy of slavery to destroy African families, these scenes are especially poignant.) He speaks no English, but learns a little while in prison, and a translator is found who helps him express his dismay at a legal system that may free him but will not affirm the true nature of the crime against him. He learns enough of Western civilization to see its contradictions, as in a scene where a fellow captive uses an illustrated Bible to explain how he can identify with Jesus. A touching scene is between lawyer and client in which Joadson at last talks to Cinque as a man and not as a piece in a puzzle. "Give us free!" Cinque cries in a powerful moment in the courtroom, indicating how irrelevant a "not guilty" verdict would be to the real facts of his case.

In one scene (1:03:04 to 1:04:46), John Quincy Adams says to Joadson "What is their story?" Joadson can only respond that they are from West Africa. "No. What is their story? Mr. Joadson, you are from where originally?" "Georgia." "Does that pretty much sum up you are, a Georgian? Is that your story? No. You are an ex-slave who has devoted his life to the abolition of slavery, and overcoming great obstacles and hardships along the way, I should imagine. That's your story, isn't it." "You and this so-called lawyer have discovered what they are – Africans. Congratulations. What you have not found out, and from as far as I can tell have not bothered to discover, is who they are. Right?"

In one scene (1:36:04 to 1:45:40) Judge Coglin prays in church to do the right thing, and then he does so. One of the slaves has been learning the story of Jesus by looking at the pictures in the Bible. "Jesus is healing people, protecting people, receiving children, walks across the sea. Something happened. They captured him and killed him. But that is not the end. They took him to a cave, wrapped him in cloth, he came back from the dead, and rose to the sky. This is where the soul goes when you die. When they kills us, this is where we will go. It does not look so bad." The slaves are lined up and shackled. Christians surround them with prayer and crosses. In the courtroom, all rise for the judge to appear. He enters the courtroom, sits down, and bangs the gavel. "After careful review and thorough reflection, I find it impossible to deny the power of the government's position. I have no doubt that the District Attorney, the representative of Queen Isabella, and others, believe in the thoroughness of their case. I also believe that the origin of the prisoners has been misrepresented, an issue that weighs crucially upon

their fate, were they born in Africa. Were they born in Africa? I believe they were. As such, the Queen's claim of ownership has no merit. Neither do the claims for salvage have any merit. Those who misrepresented where they got these men will be taken into custody for slave-trading. These people will be brought back to Africa at the expense of the government."

In another scene (2:08:17 to 2:18:41), John Quincy Adams offers his argument to the Supreme Court. In fact, here is the heart of the film. Old John Quincy Adams speaks for 11 minutes in defense of the defendants, and holds the courtroom (and the audience) spellbound. It is one of the great movie courtroom speeches. That John Quincy Adams wins his big case is a great achievement for him and a great relief for Cinque and his fellow captives, but in the sad annals of American slavery, it is a rather hollow triumph. "How is it that such a simple case of property must now be argued before the Supreme Court of the United States of America? Do we fear the decision of the lower court? Do we fear the possibility of Civil War? We ought not to pile symbolism upon a case that does not have it. It would have us disregard truth even when it stands before us, tall and proud as a man. The truth has been driven from this case like a slave, not by the arguments made here, but by the long arm of the executive branch of this government. This case concerns the very nature of man. Here letters between our Secretary of State and the Queen of Spain. One recurring theme by the Queen is the incompetence of our courts! What does she want? A court that rules against these slaves? I think not. She wants a court that acts like her court in her magical kingdom in Spain. She wants a court that does what it is told. She wants a court that our own President would be most proud. I have here an article from *The Executive Review*, by John Calhoun, my former vice-President. He says that throughout history, one race has always been subservient to another. Slavery is natural to humanity, and thus not immoral. I differ with the clear minds of the south and with our President, who apparently shares their views. The natural state of man, and I know this is a controversial idea, is freedom. The proof is the length to which man, woman, or child will go once it is taken from them. He will break loose from his chains. He will decimate his enemies. He will try, against all odds and prejudices, to get home. Cinque, would you stand up? This man is black. We can all easily see that. However, can we also see something equally true? He is the only hero in this room. If he were white, he would not be standing here before this court, fighting for his life. If he were white, and his enslavers were British, we would bestow him with medals. We would write songs about him. We would write books about him. His story would be told in our classrooms. We would make sure our children would know his name as well as the name Patrick Henry. Yet, if the south is right, what are we to do with that embarrassingly annoying document, the Declaration of Independence? What are we to make of its conceits: all men created equal, with life, liberty, and so forth. What are we to do with this? I have a modest suggestion. Tear it up. In my conversation with Cinque last night, he said that when his people think all hope is lost, they invoke their ancestors. The Mende believe that if the spirits of the ancestors are present, then so is the wisdom they had made available today. Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, James Madison, and John Adams are our ancestors. Perhaps we have feared that an appeal to our ancestors would be a sign of weakness. We have come to understand that who we are is who we were. We desperately need your wisdom to overcome our peers, our prejudices, and ourselves. Give us the courage to do what is

right. And if it means Civil War, then let it come. And when it does, then may it be, finally, the last battle of the American Revolution. That is all I have to say.”

## **Mrs. Brown – 1997 Movie**

*Mrs. Brown* is a 1997 movie starring Judy Dench and Billy Connolly. John Madden is the director, and the writer is Jeremy Brock. The movie runs 103 minutes, with a rating of PG-13. It made \$9.1 million in the USA. Judy Dench received a nomination for best actress. She won best actress with the Chicago Film Critics Association and with the Golden Globe best actress in a dramatic picture. The Screen Actors Guild nominated her for Best Actress and Billy Connolly for best supporting actor. The movie also received an academy award nomination for best make-up.

The movie is the story of Queen Victoria’s relationship with her Scot servant, John Brown. The movie is a love story about two strong-willed people who find exhilaration in testing each other. It is not about sexual love, or even romantic love, really, but about that kind of love based on challenge and fascination.

The film opens in 1864, when Queen Victoria, consumed by mourning, has already been all but invisible to her subjects for two years. Her popularity with the British people is waning and there are calls to abolish the Monarchy. Her court coddles and curtsies to her, and that is what she expects: A nod or a glance from her can subdue an adviser.

“Honest to God,” the man tells the woman, “I never thought to see you in such a state. You must miss him dreadfully.” Between ordinary people, ordinary words. Between a commoner and a queen, sheer effrontery. How can this bearded man, a Scotsman who oversees Queen Victoria's palace at Balmoral, have the gall to look her in the eye and address her with such familiarity? The atmosphere in court is instantly tense and chilling. However, the man, John Brown, has caught the queen's attention and cut through the miasma of two years' mourning for her beloved consort, Prince Albert. The little woman--a plump pudding dressed all in black--looks up sharply, and a certain light glints in her eyes.

In one scene (14:46 to 19:05), the queen refuses to leave her home for her daily ride. Her household thinks that perhaps riding might help her break out of her deep gloom. Import John Brown, a Scotsman in a kilt, arrives with one of the queen's horses and is promptly ignored. Not to be trifled with, he stands at attention in her courtyard, next to the horse. He waits for hours. “Who is that?” says Victoria. She did not call for him. He tells a servant, “Please make sure it does not happen again.” “I didn’t come all this way to sit on my ass.” “You will await your orders like everyone else.” If her husband were here, he would want to get some air inside her. “What in the hell is the point of me being here?” The next day he is there again. Proper behavior would have him waiting, docile and invisible, in the stables. “The queen will ride out if and when she chooses,” Victoria informs him. “And I intend to be there when she is ready,” Brown informs Victoria. The next morning, the queen goes for a ride, with him walking beside her. They both have done their duty.

Victoria is a complex and observant woman, who knows exactly what he is doing and is thrilled by it: Queens perhaps grow tired of being fawned upon. Soon Brown and the queen are out riding, soon the color has returned to her cheeks, soon Brown is



offering advice on how she should manage her affairs, and soon the household and the nation are whispering that this beastly man Brown is the power behind the throne.

“Mrs. Brown,” they called her behind her back. Her son the Prince of Wales is enraged to find that at Brown's order, the smoking room is to be closed at midnight (“Mr. Brown needs his rest,” the queen serenely explains). Brown takes her riding in the country and they call at a humble cottage, and the queen is offered Scotch whisky. The national newspapers raise their eyebrows. Finally, the prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli, pays a visit to see for himself what is happening in the royal household. She re-enters public life and gains in popularity. The movie ends with the death of John Brown, the continuing reign of Queen Victoria, and the disappearance of the diary of John Brown.

One can look up on the Internet information about the Queen and John Brown. Most scholars do not think rumors credible that they either had intercourse or were secretly married.

## **The Devil's Advocate – 1997 movie**

*The Devil's Advocate* is a 1997 movie starring Keanu Reeves, Al Pacino, and Charliz Theron. Kevin Lomax is an extremely successful young lawyer, an undefeated master of picking juries that do not convict. A New York law firm hires him to help with criminal cases. However, the boss is more than he seems. He defends goat-killers and real estate tycoons for a boss named John Milton, who offers him a paradise found. We eventually find that John Milton is the devil.

(21:00 to 26:15) The scene of the first meeting between Milton and Lomax, on a skyscraper roof, it scores a stunning visual impact: A water garden in the sky, with pool surfaces spilling over the edges of the building, so that water and sky seem to meet without any architectural separation. The two men walk perilously close to the edge, playing with vertigo and suggesting that the devil offers Lomax all of Manhattan at his feet. It also suggests a great and sudden fall. They sit down and introduce each other. Does he want to go back to Florida? “Walk with me,” says John Milton. After he shows him the water garden, he says, “Well, what do you think? Some people can't handle it.” “It's peaceful.” “My sentiments exactly. Fill in the resume for me. Tell me, your father, what does he do?” “I never got to know my father. He passed away before I was born. My mother raised me. Just the two of us.” “She never remarried?” “She wasn't married the first time.” “That can't be easy in a town like Gainesville, can it?” “I don't think it's easy anywhere.” He looks down. “Holy shit.” (24:30 to 26:15) “It's a little different looking down, isn't it?” “Yes, it is. O, my God.” “Your mother ... what's she like?” “She's a preacher's daughter. She's tough. She's worked in a poultry plant for as long as I can remember. She's got a church really likes, so she's usually there or they go out. They do a lot of volunteer work.” Milton responds, “Behold, I send you out as sheep amidst the wolves.” “So they say.” “It didn't rub off? The Book? The church?” “No, I'm on parole. Early release for time served.” “Lot of potential clients down there.” “Are we negotiating?” “Always.” “Can I ask you a question, then? Why do you need a criminal department?” “Our clients break the law like anyone else. I'm just tired of sending their business across the street.” “Are you offering me a job?” “I'm thinking about it. I know you got talent. I knew that before you got here. It's just the other thing I wonder about.” “What thing?” “Pressure. It changes everything. Pressure. Some people, you squeeze

them, they focus. Others fold. Can you summon your talent at will? Can you deliver on a deadline? Can you sleep at night?" "When do we talk about money?" "Money. That's the easy part."

The young lawyer is impressed. So, at first, is his wife Mary Ann, who can't believe it when Milton offers them a three-bedroom apartment in a luxurious Fifth Avenue co-op. Only Lomax's Bible-quoting mother (Judith Ivey) has her doubts, quoting scripture about Sodom, Gomorra and other keywords that pop into the mind when Manhattan is mentioned. Her advice, indeed, seems increasingly sound as the film progresses.

Lomax becomes obsessed with his job, ignoring his wife and drawing closer to a sexy woman at the office. And the wife, obsessed with having a baby, begins to come apart. She has the film's first supernatural vision, when she sees a demon materialize in the face and body of a helpful neighbor, and soon she's begging to go back to Gainesville.

John Milton has an entertaining diatribe against God. In one part of the scene (1:57:05 to 1:57:38), Milton says, "You are right about one thing. I have been watching. Couldn't help myself. Watching. Waiting. Holding my breath. But I'm no puppeteer, Kevin. I don't make things happen. Doesn't work like that." "What did you do to Mary Ann?" She has just committed suicide. "Free will. It is like butterfly wings. Once touched, they never get off the ground. I only set the stage. You pull your own strings." Lomax tries to kill him with his gun, but of course, cannot do so. (1:58:21 to 1:58:36) "You got to hold on to that fury! That's the last thing to go. That's the final hiding place. It's the final fig leaf." Later (2:01:07 to 2:02:07), Milton says, "That day on the subway, what did I say to you? What were my words to you. Maybe it was your time to lose. You didn't think so." Lomax responds, "Lose? I don't lose! I win. I win. I'm a lawyer! That's my job! That's what I do!" Milton responds, "I rest my case. Vanity is definitely my favorite sin. Kevin, it's so basic. Self-love. The all-natural opiate. It's not that you didn't care for Mary Ann, Kevin. It's just that you were a little more involved with someone else. Yourself." Lomax responds, "You're right. I did it all. I let her go." After Milton makes his appeal for Lomax to join him (2:03:31 to 2:05:37), Lomax says, "I can't do that." Milton responds, "Who are you carrying all those bricks for? God? Is that it? God? Let me tell you. Let me give you a little inside information about God. God likes to watch. He's a prankster. Think about it. He gives man instincts. He gives you this extraordinary gift, and then what does he do? I swear, for his own amusement, his own private cosmic gag reel, he sets the rules in opposition. It's the goof of all time. Look, but don't touch. Touch, but don't taste. Taste, but don't swallow. And as you jump from one foot to the next, what is he doing? He is laughing his sick, fucking ass off. He is a tight ass. He is an absentee landlord! Worship that? Never!" Lomax responds, "Better to reign hell than serve in heaven, is that it?" "Why not? I'm here on the ground with my nose in it since the whole thing began! I've nurtured every sensation man has been inspired to have! I cared about what he wanted and I never judged him! Why? Because I never rejected him, in spite of all his imperfections! I'm a fan of man! I am a humanist. Maybe the last humanist. Who in their right mind, Kevin, could possibly deny that the 20<sup>th</sup> century was entirely mine? All of it, Kevin! All of it. Mine. "I'm peaking, Kevin. It's my time now."

In the end, it was all a vision of some sort, a dream while he contemplated what to do in the case before him. Some people will feel cheated at this point. For some, it

becomes a cop out in spades. Yet, the writers go on to strengthen the point made earlier about vanity. The question before him is: Would he help a child molester go back on the street? He does the right thing. (2:14:30 to 2:17:37) “Your honor, I am terribly sorry. But I can no longer represent my client. I need to be replaced as counsel.” This will mean possible removal of his license to practice law. The judge says, “This is outrageous. Are you aware of the consequences of this action?” “I am sir.” “I want to see both attorneys in my chambers immediately. I’m going to adjourn this trial until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.” The one whom he defended said he just made the biggest mistake in his life. Mary Ann says, “Baby, what are you doing?” He responds, “The right thing. I think the right thing.” As he exits the courtroom, reporters follow him. His reporter friend, who had earlier told him that you can’t win them all, just as the devil had said in New York City, says this is the story he has always wanted. He does not think there is a story. “Bullshit. A lawyer with a crisis of conscience? You gotta be kidding. It’s huge!” “They’re going to disbar me. Write about that.” Mary Ann says, “Wait a second. Can they do that?” “Not when I get through with the story. You got to give me an exclusive. This is wire service. This is “60 minutes.” This is a story that needs to be told. It’s you. You’re a star.” With encouragement from Mary Ann, he says he will meet the reporter in the morning. They continue down the stairs.” The reporter then morphs into the devil again. “Vanity, definitely my favorite sin.”

## **Titanic – 1997 Movie**

*Titanic*, the 1997 movie starring Kate Winslow and Leonardo DiCaprio, a fictionalized story of passengers who sailed on that fateful voyage, especially the story of a self-reliant young man, Jack, and a society maiden, Rose, who is being forced to marry for money. It won 11 Academy Awards, including best picture.

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In one scene (Title 1, chapter 14), Rose, as an elderly woman, becomes the narrator, saying that no one seemed to notice the pain she was going through as a teen. In the evening, she runs the length of the ship, goes to the rear of the ship, and gets ready to jump off. Jack sees her, and says, “Do not do it.” She responds, “I will jump.” Jack says, “You won’t do it.” She responds, “Who are you to tell me what to do?” She wants him to leave. Jack responds, “I am too involved. If you jump, I jump.” That is crazy, she says. He says, “Pardon me, but I am not the one ready to jump.” They start talking. He says the water is cold. He hopes she will come back on the ship. “You don’t want to do this.” She then takes his hand. However, she slips, struggles, and screams. “Take hold of my hand. I have got you. Trust me, Rose.” In fact, it surprised me how much trust will figure into this relationship. Later in the movie, she turns away from Jack, ready to marry for money because her mother told her to do so. However, she changes her mind again. They are at the front of the ship. In a rather memorable scene, Jack has her to stand at the head of the ship and close her eyes. He takes her hand. “Trust me,” he says. He places her on the

railing at the front. He asks her to open her eyes to the beautiful view the ocean presented.

1) When Rose seems about to jump off the ship and she must trust Jack by giving him her hand when she turns to come down; Title 1, Chapter 14  
Rose as an elderly woman says no one seemed to notice the pain she was going through.

She stands there with an axe, while Jack is handcuffed to a pole. She is supposed to swing the axe and cut the cuffs. "I trust you," he says. She closes her eyes, swings the axe, and is successful in splitting the cuffs.

2) The man who puts his wife and children in a lifeboat. The children want daddy to go with them, but only women and children are allowed. He says, "Good-bye, for a little while, only a little while. Another boat will be there for daddy. You go with mommy.

3) Longer sequence: From when Fr. Byle's voice reading the Scriptures, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth." God shall be with them. Jack and Rose are together. "There shall be no more death." "The former things have passed away." Jack and Rose are at the place they first met. The ship starts tipping upward. People fall off the side. A man takes a drink. Those in the boats look on, helplessly. People are swimming. The ship breaks in half. The front half of the ship goes to the bottom of the ocean. Then the back half goes high into the air, on its way to the bottom of the ocean. Jack and Rose are at the top. People hang on to anything they can. It slowly sinks into the ocean. Jack and Rose are to hold their breath. "We are going to make it, Rose. Trust me. Keep hold of my hand." "I trust you, Jack." They swim to a float. Jack gets her on it. Jack says, "You will be all right now." The people in the boats do not go back to get them, for they fear too many will try to get in and sink the boat. Many die in the sea, waiting for other boats to arrive. "I love you, Jack," she says. "Do not say goodbye. You are going to get out of here. You are going to make many babies. You are going to die an old woman. You are not going to die here. Winning that ticket is the best thing that ever happened to me. It brought me to you. You must promise me that you will survive. No matter what happens, no matter what happens, promise me now, and never let go of that promise." "I'll never let go, Jack." Eventually, out of 20 boats, one came back to find people, but almost everyone is dead. By the time the boat arrives to Jack and Rose, Jack is dead. She remembers the promise she made. She yells out, "Come back." She had to get a whistle, but she got their attention.

## **Dead Man Walking – 1996 Movie**

*Dead Man Walking* is a 1995 movie. Its theme includes drama, politics, and religion. It received an R rating. It runs 120 min. It made \$37.1 million. It stars Susan Sarandon (Academy best actress, Screen Actors Guild, nominated Golden Globe), Sean Penn (Academy nominated for best actor, Golden Globe, won Berlin Film Festival, won Independent Spirit Award, National Society of Film Critics runner-up, Screen Actors Guild), Robert Prosky, Raymond J. Barry, and R. Lee Ermey. The director is Tim

Robbins (nominated for best director). Bruce Springsteen received a nomination for best song. Tim Robbins received a nomination from Golden Globe for best Screenplay.

The movie begins with a Louisiana nun, Sister Helen Prejean, who works in an inner-city neighborhood. One day she receives a letter from an inmate on Death Row, asking her to visit him. So she visits him, honoring the request of a lonely and desperate man. She is unprepared for the relationship that will follow. The prison chaplain does not think much of her visit, and briefs her on the ways that prisoners can manipulate outsiders. He obviously thinks of her as a bleeding heart. Her answer is unadorned: "He wrote to me and asked me to come." The inmate, named Matthew Poncelet, has been convicted, along with another man, of participating in the rape and murder of two young people on a lovers' lane. We see him first through the grating of a visitor's pen, so that his face breaks into jigsaw like pieces. In looks and appearance, he is the kind of person you would instinctively dread: He has the mousy little goatee and elaborate pompadour of a man with deep misgivings about his face. His voice is halting and his speech is ignorant. He smokes a cigarette as if sneaking puffs in a grade-school washroom. He tells her, "They got me on a greased rail to the Death House here." He wants her to help with his appeal. At one point, he mentions that they do not have anything in common. Sister Helen thinks about that, and says, "You and I have something in common. We both live with the poor." His face looks quietly stunned, as if for the first time in a long time he has been confronted with an insight about his life that is not solely ego-driven. She says that she will come to see him again and that she will help him file a last-minute appeal against his approaching execution.

Sister Helen is one of the few truly spiritual characters one may see in the movies. Movies about "religion" are often only that - movies about secular organizations that deal in spirituality. It seems so rare to find a movie character who truly does try to live according to the teachings of Jesus. It makes it a little disorienting. This character will behave according to what she thinks is right, not according to the needs of a plot, the requirements of a formula, or the pieties of those for whom religion, good grooming, polite manners and prosperity are all more or less the same thing.

Roger Ebert notes that the film is brave in another way. At this point in any conventional story, we would expect developments along familiar lines. Take your choice: (1) The prisoner is really innocent, and Sister Helen leads his 11th-hour defense as justice is done; (2) They fall in love with one another, she helps him escape, and they go on a doomed flight from the law; or, less likely, (3) She converts him to her religion, and he goes to his death praising Jesus. The movie goes down none of these paths.

Sister Helen meets the parents of the dead girl, and the father of the dead boy. (The father is seen among packing cases - moving, after a separation from his wife, who felt it was time for them to "get on with their lives," which he can never do.) She begins to understand that Matthew may indeed have been guilty. She has to face the anger of the parents, who cannot see why anyone would want to befriend a murderer ("Are you a communist?"). There is a scene (scene 8) of agonizing embarrassment, as the girl's parents make a basic mistake about her motives for visiting them. As she comes to see the terrified human beneath Matt's brash, unrepentant facade, Sister Helen becomes increasingly disturbed, not only by the terrible anguish he suffers during the long countdown, but by the rage of the victims' families, who seek retribution for their unbearable loss.

Matthew, we come to realize, is the product of an impoverished cultural background. He has been supplied with only a few clichés to serve him as a philosophy: He believes in "taking things like a man," and "showing people," and there on Death Row, he even makes a play for Sister Helen, almost as a reflex. "Death is breathing down your neck," she tells him, "and you're playing your little man-on-the-make games." He parrots a racist statement from his prison buddies in the Aryan Nation, which does his case no good, and later, when he bitterly resents his stupidity in saying those things, we realize he did not even think about them; nature abhors a vacuum, and racism abhors an empty mind and pours in to fill it.

In scene 10, the sister has a personal conversation with Matthew, explaining that Jesus faced death as well. He was a radical, made the powerful angry, and they had to kill him. Matthew asks, "Kind of like me, huh?" The sister responded, "No, Jesus wanted to change the world through his love. You changed it through murder." She has a brief biblical debate with the chaplain about the death penalty.

At the end, Poncelet finally admits his responsibility for the murders. Previously, she challenged him that her job was to help him die with dignity by accepting his responsibility in the murders. In scene 12, he describes the physical aspects of the death he will experience. In scene 13, he has a final, banal conversation with his family. In scene 15, he admits that he was chicken. He could not stand up to his partner when he shot the two teens. He then admits that he killed the boy. He raped the girl. She responds that he can die with dignity now. He is a child of God. She encourages him to tell the families of the teens that he hopes they can have peace. She then sings a song. In scene 16, she says that she wants the last face that he sees in this world to be one of love. She wants him to look at her when they kill him.

The movie comes down to a drama of an entirely unexpected kind: a spiritual drama, involving Matthew's soul. Christianity teaches that God can forgive all sin, and that no sinner is too low for God's love. Sister Helen believes that. Truly believes it, with every atom of her being. Yet she does not press Matthew for a "religious" solution to his situation. What she hopes for is that he can go to his death in reconciliation with himself and his crime. The last half-hour of this movie is overwhelmingly powerful - not the least in Matthew's strained 11th-hour visit with his family, where we see them all trapped in the threadbare clichés of a language learned from television shows and saloon jukeboxes. With his scheduled execution fast approaching, she struggles for the life, the dignity, and the soul of a confused and angry man. In the end, it is her faith and her fierce courage that sustains her when she stands with Matthew and with the victims' families.

Roger Ebert says of this film that it ennobles filmmaking. It demonstrates how a movie can confront a grave and controversial issue in our society and see it fairly, from all sides, not take any shortcuts, and move the audience to a great emotional experience without unfair manipulation. He goes on to say that with this film, Tim Robbins made that rare thing, a film that is an exercise of philosophy. This movie spoils us for other films, because it reveals so starkly how most movies fall into conventional routine, and lull us with the reassurance that they will not look too hard, or probe too deeply, or make us think beyond the boundaries of what is comfortable.

## Entertaining Angels – 1996 Movie

*Entertaining Angels* is a 1996 movie. It received a PG-13 rating. It runs 112 minutes. It starred Moira Kelly, Heather Graham, and Martin Sheen.

The movie is a story of Dorothy Day, a remarkable woman who became one of the most influential human rights activists of the 20th century. Day defied social and political conventions in her quest for self-fulfillment in New York's bohemian Greenwich Village during the explosive era of the 1920s and '30s. She engaged in unconventional love affairs, boisterous barroom debates with such friends as Eugene O'Neill and Floyd Dell, and led radical demonstrations against social injustice. After living as a young boheme in 1930's New York--replete with heavy drinking, chain-smoking, sexual promiscuity, and unconventional activism--Dorothy Day yearns for a deeper meaning in life. Surrounded by affluence, she chose to live in poverty among the poor of the Lower East Side. Deeply moved by the destitution and injustices around her, she underwent a powerful change and became a voice for the voiceless, a soldier for justice and a champion of non-violence. The movie is the moving story of how one woman experiences God's redemption and then shares it with others. The movie is a great example of living out one's faith and giving all of oneself to God's call! She discovers God and a greater fulfillment in aiding the poor by opening the Houses of Hospitality in the Lower East Side and founding the Catholic Workers Movement.

1:33:24 to 1:35:57, Dorothy enters the sanctuary of the local Roman Catholic Church. She has just left a meeting with people she had hoped to lead to serve the poor. They have voted against her direction. She then pours out her prayer to God. "Where are you? Why don't you answer me? I need you! These brothers and sisters of yours, the ones you want me to love, let me tell you something. They smell. They have lice and tuberculosis. Am I to find you in them? Well, you're ugly. You drink. You wet your pants. You vomit. How could anyone ever love you? I need you. But you're not here. You have deserted me too. Haven't you? I'm not who you thought I was. I'm sorry."

## Forrest Gump – 1994 Movie

Forrest Gump

*Forrest Gump* is a 1994 movie. It stars Tom Hanks, Robin Wright, and Gary Sinise. It received a PG-13 rating. It runs 135 minutes. Robert Zemeckis directed it. Eric Roth wrote it. It made \$679 million. The basis of the movie is a book of the same name by Winston Groom, although the movie differs substantially from it. The film garnered a total of 13 Academy Award nominations, of which it won six, including Best Picture, Best Visual Effects, Best Director (Robert Zemeckis), and Best Actor (Tom Hanks).

As Roger Ebert notes, it may be a comedy, or a drama, or a dream. Its hero is a thoroughly decent man with an IQ of 75, who manages between the 1950s and the 1980s to become involved in every major event in American history. He survives them all with only honesty and niceness as his shields.

Yet this is not a heartwarming story about a mentally retarded man. That cubbyhole is much too small and limiting for Forrest Gump. The movie is more of a meditation on our times, as seen through the eyes of a man who lacks cynicism and takes things for exactly what they are. Watch him carefully and you will understand why some

people are criticized for being "too clever by half." Forrest is clever by just exactly enough.

Tom Hanks provides a balancing act between comedy and sadness, in a story rich in big laughs and quiet truths.

Forrest is born to an Alabama boardinghouse owner (Sally Field) who tries to correct his posture by making him wear braces, but who never criticizes his mind. When Forrest is called "stupid," his mother tells him, "Stupid is as stupid does," and Forrest turns out to be incapable of doing anything less than profound. In addition, when the braces finally fall from his legs, it turns out he can run like the wind. That is how he gets a college football scholarship, in a life story that eventually becomes a running gag about his good luck. Gump the football hero becomes Gump the Medal of Honor winner in Vietnam, and then Gump the Ping-Pong champion, Gump the shrimp boat captain, Gump the millionaire stockholder (he gets shares in a new "fruit company" named Apple Computer), and Gump the man who runs across America and then retraces his steps.

It could be argued that with his IQ of 75 Forrest does not quite understand everything that happens to him. Not so. He understands everything he needs to know, and the rest, the movie suggests, is just surplus. He even understands everything that is important about love, although Jenny, the girl he falls in love with in grade school and never falls out of love with, tells him, "Forrest, you don't know what love is." She is a stripper by that time.

The movie is ingenious in taking Forrest on his tour of recent American history. Forrest stands next to the schoolhouse door with George Wallace, he teaches Elvis how to swivel his hips, he visits the White House three times, he is on the Dick Cavett show with John Lennon, and in a sequence that will have you rubbing your eyes with its realism, and he addresses a Vietnam-era peace rally on the Mall in Washington. Special effects are also used in creating the character of Forrest's Vietnam friend Lt. Dan (Gary Sinise), a Ron Kovic type who quite convincingly loses his legs.

Using carefully selected TV clips and dubbed voices, Zemeckis is able to create some hilarious moments, as when LBJ examines the wound in what Forrest describes as "my butt-ox." The biggest laugh in the movie comes after Nixon inquires where Forrest is staying in Washington, and then recommends the Watergate. (That is not the laugh, just the setup.) As Forrest's life becomes a guided tour of straight-arrow America, Jenny (played by Robin Wright) goes on a parallel tour of the counterculture. She goes to California, of course, and drops out, tunes in, and turns on. She's into psychedelics and flower power, antiwar rallies and love-ins, drugs and needles. Eventually it becomes clear that between them Forrest and Jenny have covered all of the landmarks of our recent cultural history, and the accommodation they arrive at in the end is like a dream of reconciliation for our society. What a magical movie.

The movie begins with a feather falling to the feet of Forrest Gump sitting at a bus stop in Savannah, Georgia in 1981. Forrest picks up the feather and puts it in the book *Curious George*, then tells the story of his life to a woman seated next to him. The listeners at the bus stop change regularly throughout his narration, each showing a different attitude ranging from disbelief and indifference to rapt veneration. He offers some her some chocolots, saying, "My momma said that life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what your are going to get."



Forrest grew up in fictional Greenbo County, Alabama where his mother ran a bed-and-breakfast out of their home. As a child, Forrest had to wear leg braces due to having a crooked spine. One time, a young Elvis Presley was a boarder at Forrest's home, and we learn that Forrest's "crazy little dance" while wearing the braces would prove to be the inspiration for Elvis's future provocative dance moves.

On his first day of school in the early 1950s, he meets a girl named Jenny, whose life we follow in parallel to Forrest's at times. Jenny was sexually abused by her father as a child, something that torments her for most of the rest of her life, though Forrest sees only the sweet girl who sat next to him on the school bus. He runs away from some bullies, and the braces fall off.

Forrest's ability to run exceedingly well gets him into college on a football scholarship playing for Bear Bryant at the University of Alabama. He becomes an All-American kick returner and meets President John F. Kennedy, the first of three U.S. Presidents he will meet in his life. While at the University, he also witnesses the school's desegregation and Governor George Wallace's symbolic blocking of the school doors. He visits Jenny at an all girls school. Jenny asks, "What you gonna be when you grow up?" Forrest says, "Why can't I be me?" She has him touch her breasts for the first time. He becomes an all-American. He meets President Kennedy at a reception and tells him that after drinking 12 Dr. Peppers, he had to pee.

At graduation, he enlists in the army and is sent to Vietnam, where he makes fast friends with a man named Bubba, who convinces Forrest to go into the shrimping business with him when the war is over. Forrest sees Jenny playing a song at a strip club, and he rescues her. He tells her that he loves her. She says he does not know what love is. She wonders aloud whether she can fly off the bridge. He tells her that he is going to Vietnam. She tells him not to be brave, and if there is trouble, run. She then hitches a ride with someone. Mom tells her to come back safe.

Forrest meets his commanding officer Lieutenant Dan Taylor. Though Forrest ends up saving much of his platoon in a Viet Cong ambush, Bubba is killed in action. Forrest's bravery leads him to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, but Lieutenant Dan blames Forrest for robbing him of his destiny to be killed with honor in the field of battle with his men, since "somebody from his family had fought and died in every single American war."

Forrest is in recovery for a bullet shot to his buttocks. After Lieutenant Dan tells Forrest, of his destiny to die on the battlefield, he says, "I was Lieutenant Dan Taylor." Forrest responds, "You still Lieutenant Dan." He discovers his uncanny ability for ping-pong, eventually gaining popularity and rising to celebrity status due to his participation in Ping Pong Diplomacy. While in Washington, D.C. to be awarded the Medal of Honor by President Lyndon B. Johnson Forrest accidentally gets swept up in an anti-war rally led by Abbie Hoffman. After giving a speech by the Washington Mall Forrest reunites with Jenny. We learn that she has been living a hippie counterculture lifestyle, including drug use. We also learn her boyfriend hits her. He gives her his medal. "Why are you so good to me?" "You are my girl." "I'll always be your girl." She got on the bus and left.

Forrest later goes on television (The Dick Cavett Show) to discuss playing ping-pong in China, he meets John Lennon, who is also a guest on the program. Thereafter, Forrest temporarily reunites with Lieutenant Dan, who is now living in New York on government disability, having lost both of his legs due to his injuries in Vietnam. He is

angry at God. He is angry at other soldiers at the VA who want him to find Jesus. Lieutenant Dan jokingly promises Forrest that if he ever becomes a shrimp boat captain, he will become his first mate. Forrest also returns to Washington as a member of the U.S. National Ping Pong Team to meet President Richard Nixon. Nixon arranges for Forrest to stay in the Watergate Hotel and that evening we see Forrest calling Hotel security to complain about people in an adjacent room keeping him up with their flashlights. Nixon resigns shortly thereafter.

Returning home from the army, Forrest endorses a company that makes ping-pong paddles, earning himself \$25,000, which he uses to buy a shrimping boat, fulfilling his promise to Bubba. He names the boat Jenny. He hopes Jenny is happy, but she is not, given her drug addicted life. She almost jumps from many floors up. He writes to Lieutenant Dan, who then fulfils his promise and joins him in his shrimping venture. Though initially Forrest has little success, after finding his boat the only surviving boat in the area after Hurricane Carmen, he begins to pull in huge amounts of shrimp and uses it to buy an entire fleet of shrimp boats. Of course, the life of Lieutenant Dan as he knew it was over. He had fallen into despair that led to abuse of alcohol and drugs. He lost all desire to live. When they meet up on the shrimp boat again (1:34:40 to 1:36:24 or 1:38:16), when they have no shrimp again, he wonders where God is. "You will never sink this boat. You call this a storm, you son of a bitch. It is time for a showdown." Dan climbs up the netting to the top mast, and there, swaying and swinging in the gale, he vents his anger at God. The words stream out in a fury of invective. He challenges God to appear, to show up like a man. He ridicules the God who has taken away his legs, his livelihood, his pride, and his manhood. "You call this a storm?" he says to God. Then there is this "Boom!" and a blaze of lightning and a crash of thunder. Being in the only shrimp boat left, they caught plenty of shrimp, Bubba Gump Shrimp. Eventually, Lieutenant Dan thanks Forrest for saving his life, jumps in the water, and Forrest says that Dan made his peace with God. He gets news that his mother is dying, and he goes to her side. He gets a job mowing lawn, and Lieutenant Dan invests the money in Apple Computers and Forrest is financially secure for the rest of his life, and donates much of his newfound fortune to various causes -- including giving Bubba's share of the money to Bubba's previously indigent family.

One day Jenny returns to Forrest without explanation and starts to live with him. Though he is still naive about her past, it is clear that she is still haunted by her father's abuse. She throws rocks at the house she lived in as a child. She started throwing rocks at the house, but "sometimes, there are just not enough rocks." She gets him running shoes. She teaches him to dance. "We were like family, Jenny and me, and it was the happiest time of my life." Forrest proposes marriage to Jenny. She says he would make a good husband, but that he does not really want to marry her. He says, "I am not a smart man, but I know what love is." While she declines, she feels obliged to prove her love to him by sleeping with him. She leaves early the next morning.

On a whim, given his sadness of the house without Jenny, Forrest elects to go for a run (1:52:00 to 1:48:44). Seemingly capriciously, he decides to keep running, doing so across the country several times over the course of several years, becoming famous. Several dozen other people decide to follow him on his run around the country, regarding him as a kind of guru or prophet. He just ran for no reason. People thought it gave them hope and inspiration. We also learn that Forrest's wisdom led the creation of the "Have A

Nice Day" yellow smiley-face and the phrase "Shit Happens" on bumper stickers. He remembered his mother saying, "You gotta put the past behind you before you can move on." He figured, after three years, he was ready to go home. People kept waiting for him to say something wise, but it did not happen. Forrest decides that he has run far enough and in the middle of the desert, he turns around to go back to Alabama, leaving his dumbfounded followers trying to figure out what to do next.

Back in 1981, Forrest reveals that he is waiting at the bus stop because he received a letter from Jenny who, having seen him run on television, asks him to visit her. Jenny is only six blocks away. She admits that she was messed up for a long time. She apologizes for how she treated him. She is a waitress and has a nice apartment. She brought him the box chocolates. She kept a scrapbook of his running days. Once he is reunited with Jenny, Forrest discovers she has a young son, Forrest Jr. of whom Forrest is the father. Jenny tells Forrest she is suffering from a virus (probably HIV, though this is never definitively stated).

Together the three move back to Greenbo, Alabama. Jenny and Forrest finally marry, with Lieutenant Dan, wearing prosthetic legs, in attendance with his fiancée. Jenny dies soon afterward. Forrest talks to Jenny at the graveside. He has bulldozed the house in which she grew up. "Mamma always said that dying is part of life. I sure wish it wasn't." "I don't know if mamma is right, or if Lieutenant Dan is right. I don't know if we each have a destiny, or if we're all just floating around accidental-like, on a breeze. But I think maybe it's both. Maybe both get happening at the same time. But I miss you, Jenny."

The film ends with father and son waiting for the school bus on little Forrest's first day of school. Opening the book his son is taking to school, the white feather from the beginning of the movie is seen to fall from within the pages. The bus, driven by the now older driver who once drove Forrest himself to school pulls up. Father and son express their love for each other. As the bus pulls away, the white feather is caught on a breeze and drifts skyward as the movie closes.

## **Guarding Tess – 1994 Movie**

*Guarding Tess* is a 1994 comedy and drama movie. It received a PG-13 rating. It has a run time of 98 minutes. It made \$26.1 million. It stars Shirley MacLaine as Tess Carlisle and Nicolas Cage as Doug. Shirley MacLaine received a nomination for best actress in a comedy in the Golden Globe Awards. The movie concerns an aging, lonely and dominating widow and former first lady makes life difficult for the obsessive Secret Service agent who guards her.

Sometimes you can hear an entire relationship reflected in the intonation of a single word. At the beginning of "Guarding Tess," (0:00:44 to 0:02:27) a man carries a tray upstairs to a closed bedroom door, takes his gun from a holster, places it on a table next to the door, knocks, and says "Breakfast." In the way he says it, you know that he has had a long and not pleasant relationship with the person on the other side of the door. "I'm going. I thought I'd say goodbye." He places the breakfast tray down for Tess to get it later. He sees the cooks in the kitchen. "Gentleman. All the best. Good luck and goodbye. It's been fun." By now, you also know that he is determined to perform his job correctly. The man is a Secret Service agent, Doug Chesnic, head of a detail assigned to

protect a former first lady named Tess Carlisle. She is "beloved" by her fellow Americans, as all first ladies of course are. However, in private she is a real piece of work: Demanding, stubborn, sarcastic, and able to get under the skin and find the weak points. Chesnic has been assigned to her for a tour of three years, and when his tour is up, he requests a change of scenery. She does not agree.

Doug is a professional who knows his job, does it well, is proud, and resents having to perform little domestic chores for his client. However, he is vulnerable to her; she has an unerring instinct about which buttons to push, and how far to go.

Tess Carlisle is a woman who once had the world as her stage, and now operates out of an upstairs bedroom in a comfortable farmhouse in Ohio. She is not elderly, or weak, or unintelligent, but she is lonely. During the film we see no friends, and her only relationships seem to be with her Service Service guards, her cooks, her secretary, her chauffeur and other employees.

Accustomed to having power on a vast scale, she now micromanages every detail of her shrunken realm. When Doug plucks the rose on her breakfast tray to wear in his lapel, she notices it immediately, and demands her rose back. Worse, she complains about the rose thievery in a telephone call to the current president, who sounds a lot like Bill Clinton and provides many of the movie's best moments in his anguished return calls to Agent Chesnic. ("Goddamnit, Doug, I'm supposed to be handling the problems of the free world here, and I'm dealing with a Secret Serviceman who's stealing flowers from a little old lady.") When Tess learns that Doug has requested reassignment after his three years with her, she takes care of that with a call to the president, too, and Doug is back on the farm in Ohio.

The movie provides the matter-of-fact detail regarding the daily routine inside the Carlisle home. There is an easy camaraderie between Chesnic and the household staff members, including her chauffeur, her male nurse and her neurotic, barely functioning secretary. As Special Agent in Charge, as he particularly insists he is, Chesnic enforces all rules and regulations, and that leads to showdowns with Tess. In one scene (0:23:11 to 0:24:57 before cussing or to 0:25:34), for example, she wants to sit on the wrong side of the back seat of her car, in violation of security procedures. You see, Tess wants to sit in the back sit behind the driver. The secret service agent does not allow her to get her in. Doug invites her to the other side, she gets in, and scoots over to behind the driver. Doug tells the driver to stop the car. Tess tells him to start it. "Do you like your job?" Doug responds that she cannot sit behind the driver. "That's a regulation. Nobody does it. Not the president, not anybody." She responds, "The sun will be on that side, and I do not want the sun." Doug says, "Perhaps you could sit on the proper side but slightly then to the middle." "Nope." "Ma'am, excuse me, but we are not leaving this house until you are seated properly with your seat belt firmly fastened." An agent in another car says, "Jesus Christ, let her sit on the hood if she wants to." Finally, she moves over to behind the passenger seat. "Family outings are so stressful," says another man.

As the story unfolds, we begin to sense a deep current of feeling between Tess and Agent Chesnic. It is not love, but a certain respect for a tough opponent, and even some grudging affection. The movie takes an unanticipated turn. The chauffer kidnaps her!

In one scene (1:29:28 to 1:30:14), Tess communicates directly to the president. "Tess, are they treating you all right in tht hospital? If they're not ..." Tess says, "Harold,

I want this Secret Service agent of mine taken care of.” The president responds, “Tess, the man discharged a firearm in a public place.” “I don’t care about any of that. This young man saved my life. He’s like a son to me, Harold. I want him taken care of, understand?” “Sure, Tess. I’m sure we ...” “And if anything should ever happen to me I want your personal word that you will look after him.” “Sure, Tess ...” “Good. That’s all I wanted to know. You have yourself a nice day.”

## The Shawshank Redemption – 1994 Movie

*The Shawshank Redemption* is a 1994 movie starring Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman. It won best picture. It did not earn the money of other films. Roger Ebert had many insights I have incorporated here.

The prosecutor accuses Andy Dufresne of the murder of his wife, the court judges him guilty, and he arrives in Shawshank prison. The story is about time, patience, and loyalty. It creates a warm hold on our feelings because it makes us a member of a family. Many movies offer us vicarious experiences and quick, superficial emotions. "Shawshank" slows down and looks. It uses the narrator's calm, observant voice to include us in the story of men who have formed a community behind bars. It is deeper than most films; about continuity in a lifetime, based on friendship and hope. It shows two men serving life sentences developing a profound friendship and in the process fighting off despair.

Although the movie is about Andy, we never see the world from his perspective. Red narrates the story. Red can get you anything. Although Andy is innocent, the details of his case take on the character of unreality inside the prison. It has its own rules. Andy asks for rock hammer, a small hammer that, Red thinks, would take 600 years to tunnel through the walls. Prisoners, guards, and the warden abuse him. Red's narration of the story allows him to speak for all of the prisoners, who sense a fortitude and integrity in Andy that survives the years. Andy will not back down. Nevertheless, he is not violent, just formidably sure of himself.

For the warden, he is both a challenge and a resource. Andy knows all about bookkeeping and tax preparation. Before long, the warden moves him out of his prison job in the library and assigned to the warden's office, where he sits behind an adding machine and monitors the warden's ill-gotten gains. His fame spreads, and eventually he is doing the taxes and pension plans for most of the officials of the local prison system. Prisoners finally accept him and hold him in esteem. What quietly amazes everyone in the prison -- and us, too -- is the way he accepts the good and the bad as all part of some larger pattern that only he can fully see.

The movie has its basis in a story, Rita Hayworth and the *Shawshank Redemption*, by Stephen King, which is quite unlike most of King's work. The horror here is not of the supernatural kind, but of the sort that flows from the realization that 10, 20, 30 years of a man's life have unreeled in the same unchanging daily prison routine.

Andy, as played by Robbins, keeps his thoughts to himself. Red, as Freeman plays him, is therefore a crucial element in the story: His close observation of this man, down through the years, provides the way we monitor changes and track the measure of his influence on those around him. We identify with Red. Redemption, when it comes, is

Red's. We have been shown by Andy's example that you have to keep true to yourself, not lose hope, bide your time, set a quiet example and look for your chance.

In one scene (1:07:00 or 1:08:18 to 1:09:46; 1:11:08 to 1:12:33) Andy is in the office of the warden. He looks over some records. He plays some beautiful music from Mozart over the prison loudspeaker. He locks the door. The prisoners stop what they are doing and listen, the music inspiring them in unexpected ways. Freeman then narrates, "I have no idea to this day what those two Italian ladies were singing about. Truth is, I don't want to know. Some things are best left unsaid. I like to think it was something so beautiful it can't be expressed in words and makes your heart ache because of it. I tell you, those voices soared, higher and farther than any body in a gray place dares to dream. It was like a beautiful bird flapped into our drab cage and made those walls dissolve away. And for the briefest of moments every last man at Shawshank felt free. It pissed the warden off something awful." The warden tried to get him to open the door. The officer eventually breaks into the room. He received two weeks in the hole. When he returns to the cafeteria, his co-prisoners greet him with "Hey, Maestro, couldn't you find something good to play, like Hank Williams or something." "They broke down the door before I could take requests." Another said, "Was it worth two weeks?" "Easiest time I ever did." Another prisoner said there is no such thing as easy time in the hole. A week in the hole is like a year. "I had Mr. Mozart to keep me company." Another prisoner asked, "So they let you tote that record player down there, huh?" "It was in here (pointing to his head), and in here (pointing to his heart). That is the beauty of music. They can't get that from you. Haven't you ever felt that way about music?" Red says, "Well, I played a mean harmonica as a younger man. Lost interest in it, though. Didn't make much sense in here." Andy says, "Here's where it makes the most sense. You need it so you don't forget." "Forget," says Red. Andy responds, "Forget that there are places in the world that aren't made out of stone. There's something inside that they can't get to, that they can't touch. That's yours." Red asks, "What are you talking about?" "Hope." Red says, "Hope. Let me tell you something, my friend. Hope is a dangerous thing. Hope can drive a man insane. It's got no use on the inside. You'd better get used to that idea." Andy, referring to another prisoner who had just been given his freedom, could not adjust to life on the outside, and so, committed suicide, says, "Like Brooks did?"

In one scene, in which there is some cussing, (1:40:42 to 1:47:17), Andy shares his love for his wife. He did not know how to show it. He drove her away. That is why she died. I killed her. He was in the path of the tornado. It did not expect the storm to last as long as it did. He asks Red if he thinks he will ever get out. Andy says he will go to Mexico, along the Pacific Ocean. "They say it has no memory." Andy invites Red to join him, if he gets out. Red does not think he could make it on the outside. Andy says, "I think you underestimate yourself." Red is frustrated, for they are pipe dreams, Mexico is down there, and we are here. Andy agrees: "I guess it comes down to a simple choice, really," he tells Red. "Get busy livin' or get busy dyin'."

In another scene (1:55:20 to 1:55:42), after Andy has escaped, Red reflects upon the love Andy had for geology; an ice age here, a warming there. It takes pressure and time.

In another scene (2:05:04 to 2:05:40), after Andy has escaped, Red reflects upon the sadness of not having Andy in prison anymore. Some birds are not meant to be caged. Their feathers are just too bright. When they fly away, the part of you knows they should

never have been caged rejoices. Still, the place you live in is just that much more drab and empty with them gone.

At the end (2:15:13 to 2:16:06), in a letter that Red finds under a tree, Andy says that hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things. No good thing ever dies.

All the time, something hidden and secret is happening, revealed to us only at the end. There is a lot of life and humor in the movie, and warmth in the friendship that builds up between Andy and Red. It has excitement and suspense, although not when we expect it. Mostly the film is an allegory about holding onto a sense of personal worth, despite everything. The slowness of the movie in the middle gives us a sense of a leaden passage of time, before the final redemption.

The key to the film's structure, according to Roger Ebert, is that it is not about its hero, but about our relationship with him - our curiosity, our pity, our admiration. People approach films about "redemption" with great wariness. Many people do not get a thrill by the prospect of a great film - it sounds like work. However, many people hunger for messages of hope, and when a film offers one, it is likely to have staying power. In reality, the movie did not have much going for it. The title is not attractive. A prison drama is not appealing to women. At the time, Robbins and Freeman had respect, but no star drawing power. It needed word of mouth to find an audience. Evidence suggests that occurred, but then, the distributors withdrew it from theaters. Instead, in one of the most remarkable stories in home video history, it found its real mass audience on tapes and discs, and through TV screenings. Within five years, "Shawshank" was a phenomenon, a video bestseller and renter that its admirers feel they have discovered for themselves. When the Wall Street Journal ran an article about the "Shawshank" groundswell in April 1999, it was occupying first place in the Internet Movie Database worldwide vote of the 250 best films; it is usually in the top five.

Polls and rentals reflect popularity but do not explain why people value "Shawshank" so fervently. Maybe it plays more like a spiritual experience than a movie. Much of the movie involves quiet, solitude, and philosophical discussions about life.

## **Speed – 1994 Movie**

*Speed* is a 1994 movie, an action and adventure thriller. It made \$121.2 million in the USA. AFI voted it among the top 100 Most Heart-Pounding Movies of all time. Few hostage movies reach this level of tension and sustain throughout the movie. It won Oscars for Best Sound and Sound Effects Editing.

A disgruntled former LAPD cop wants revenge and money. The movie begins when a deranged mad bomber, Howard Payne (Dennis Hopper), severs cables to an elevator inside a Los Angeles skyscraper. The bomber demands \$3 million ransom or he will blow the emergency cables. LA Bomb Squad members Jack (Keanu Reeves) and his partner, Harry (Jeff Daniels), must defuse the bomb before Payne blows the cables.

Jack and his crew outsmart Payne and celebrate their victory. Payne jumps to plan B. He rigs an LA transit bus so that if it exceeds 50mph a bomb will become armed—and if it drops below 55mph, it detonates. Payne allows Jack to board the bus and alert the passengers of the situation. Annie (Sandra Bullock) drives the vehicle when the original driver becomes injured during a shootout. From this point on, Annie and Jack must do what they can to prevent the bomb from exploding as they race through the crowded Los

Angeles roadways. Tension is thick as the hero must overcome one impossible obstacle after another. One such hurdle involves a 50-foot hole in the road on which the bus must pass. Jack orders Annie to put the pedal to the metal in an attempt to jump the huge gap. One notable quote: At one point, Howard instructs Jack: "Do not attempt to grow a brain."

In one intense action scene (15:20 to 17:20), Jack and Harry must work together and trust each other to save the innocent victims in the elevator car. [In this scene, one victim uses the word "hell," and another shows a significant portion of leg]

## Princess Caraboo – 1994 Movie

*Princess Caraboo* is a 1994 comedy, drama, and romance movie, rated PG, that earned \$2.9 million. The movie stars John Lithgow, Phoebe Cates, and her real life husband Kevin Kline. A delightful fairy-tale comedy, and touching family entertainment.

A wealthy family, the Worralls, takes in a homeless, beautiful young woman in 19th-century England wearing foreign clothes and speaking a foreign language, and was deemed by experts to be a princess from an exotic island. Because she does not speak English, Mr. Worrall determines she is an exotic princess and seeks to exploit her for profit. The story is loosely based on a true story of a woman with a mysterious past. She may, or may not, be a princess. Her arrival in a British village in 1817 caused quite a stir in the British aristocracy. It is based upon a true story and of a young woman who came from humble beginnings and desired to step outside of her poor, lower class life. She recreated herself to be a person with an exotic language, culture and style that was unknown to anthropology experts. She peaked the interests of the experts and the townspeople by her unusual behaviors.

In one scene (1:21:00 to 1:26:02; 1:27:40 to 1:29:08; 1:29:36 to 1:34:20), Mrs. Worrall dismisses her husband. Princess Caraboo/Mary Baker is imprisoned in the barn. Mr. Gutch arrives and gets her to tell her story. "I suppose you come to tell me you told me so." "I haven't come to do that," Mr. Gutch says. "I'm sorry to have deceived Mrs. Worrall. She was deceived 'cause she was kind, but them others, I don't mind about them." Mr. Gutch says, "They're the ones that may caost you." "Well, I don't care what they do to me." Mr. Gutch responds, "Well, I care what they do to you. I don't think what you've done is reprehensible. I think it's remarkable. An adventure." "Adventure. I suppose it was." Mr. Gutch says, "How did you make up the story, invent the language? It's a feat of the imagination." She says, "Is that what it is? It weren't nothin' difficult. Them sailors all have tales to tell of far-off lands from rovin' far over the oceans." Mr. Gutch says, "Is that where it started?" "No. London. I seen a French girl beggin', and I see how good she does, 'cause people take pity on her plight before they do on one of their own kind. So, I try pretendin' I'm French to beg. But they take me to see a Frenchman. So I has to pretend I'm someone else. And that's how it starts. I don't know. 'Twas easy. What I was her – the princess – I was her. I just become her. It comes natural, and I'm not Mary Baker no more. I'm her." Mr. Gutch says, "I would like to hear you tell her story." "I'm not tellin' it. We'll be here all night." Mr. Gutch encourages her, "Tell me part of it, a small part. 'and From the moment where she escapes from the English captain when she lands in England." "Land ho, cries the sailor. Now, the princess don't know what that means but she sees a land that's as green and sweet as the ocean is



salt and blue. England, one of the sailors sang, like a man sings to the girl he loves. And the princess is so happy at the sight of this land that she starts to weep. And the captain, he puts his hand on her to send her back below, and she shouts, *Holie wasist crampon!* And that means, Unhand me, you indelicate rogue. I am a personage of royal blood that is bluer than the deepest blue of a sapphire. And she dived over the side and swam strongly to shore.” A pause occurs as she asks, “Are you laughin at me, Mr. Gutch?” He says, “Not in the least. It’s very beautiful. Go on with it, please.” She continues, “And when her tears had dried so that she could see, she saw England, a land of unhappiness and misery, with folks a-beggin and hungry. The princess wandered across the country from village to village and people was mostly kind and fed her and gave her shelter. But then she came to a village where they reported her for beggin’, but she were’t beggin’, you see, ‘cause pricesses don’t ever beg. Even when they’re dyin’ of hunger, they don’t beg. So she done nothin’ wrong, and that’s truth. I done nothin’ wrong. Not really. Not enough to be hanged for.” Mr. Gutch says, “I’ll do whatever I can for you, Mary. I promise.” The scene concludes with their escape. Mrs. Worrall assists Mr. Gutch in getting her husband in trouble for fraud. He proposes to Mr. Worrall to exchange one fraud for another, the fraud at the bank for the fraud committed by Mary Baker. Mrs. Worrall goes to the barn, tells her of a ship bound for America, and who to contact in Philadelphia. Mary thanks her for her kindness, and Mrs. Worrall responds, “Don’t thank me. You owe your deliverance to Mr. Gutch. And, in a way, I owe my deliverance to you. I wish you luck, Mary.” As Mary leaves, she talks with the butler, Mr. Frixos, as he says, “I wish you every success and happiness in America, Princess.” “Thank you, Mr. Frixos.” Mr. Gutch and Mary say goodbye to each other, hoping to see each other sometime. “In a way that I had never expected, this girl had held out her hand to me and now, I was letting her go.” As he watches her depart in a boat, Mr. Gutch reflects, “What are the chances for love in a man’s life? Very few. Maybe one. And I had not had the courage to declare myself. Instead, the coward in me had taken refuge in this safe, dull life. ... This was my reality. I was a printer, newspaper publisher, and a man of supposed responsibility. Or was I?” In the next scene, Mr. Gutch joins her on the ship. He says to her, in Irish, “There you are. Here I am.” They end up seeing Napoleon Bonapart on St. Helena. A voice tells what happens to them. “It’s a very good story. Is it true, do you think?”

## **Unforgiven – 1992 Movie**

*Unforgiven* is a 1992 Western film directed by Clint Eastwood with screenplay by David Webb Peoples. The film tells the story of a retired gunslinger who takes on one more job. A Western that deals frankly with the uglier aspects of violence and the myth of the Old West; it stars Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman, Morgan Freeman, Richard Harris, Jaimz Woolvett, Saul Rubinek and Frances Fisher. Eastwood dedicated the movie to former directors and mentors Don Siegel and Sergio Leone. The film won four Academy Awards including Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Gene Hackman), Best Director, Best Film Editing and Best Picture. *Unforgiven* was inducted into the United States National Film Registry in 2004, and is one of the few westerns in the registry.

Critical response was generally very positive. The film makes an appearance in the American Film Institute's 100 years, 100 movies. In 2005, Time.com named it one of the 100 best movies of the last 80 years. In addition, the film is 'Certified Fresh' by

rottentomatoes.com, with a 96% approval rating among reviews. Many critics acclaimed the film for its noir-ish moral ambiguity and atmosphere. They also acclaimed it as a fitting eulogy to the western genre.

The movie seems to take place in 1881 Wyoming, given a reference to the assassination attempt of Garfield. Yet, when the townspeople are forming a posse, they are discussing who will pay for expenses, and one of them says that the store won't sell them any more 30-30 shells unless they pay cash. The 30-30 was not introduced as a cartridge until late 1893. Further, pheasants were not introduced to the American west from Asia until the 1890s, they are present along the railroad tracks in 1880. Several of the characters, including Little Bill and William Munny, are seen sometimes wearing shirts that button all the way up the front. This is incorrect for 1880/81, when men's shirts were still of the pullover variety, with or without a collar, and a small buttoned placket at the top.

In the town of Big Whiskey, a cowboy with the aid of a fellow cowboy slashes a prostitute's face for laughing at his small penis. The venomous local sheriff and former gunfighter, Little Bill Daggett (Gene Hackman), fines the cowboy and his friend seven ponies, payable to the prostitute's pimp and saloon owner Skinny. The other prostitutes, furious over the cowboys' lax punishments, conspire with each other to offer a \$1000 reward to anyone who kills the two. Miles away in Western Kansas, the Schofield Kid (Woolvett) approaches a farm owned by William Munny (Clint Eastwood) and his two children, looking for a partner to do the hit. Munny, known in his youth as an infamous gunfighter, murderer and bandit, has since retired, having forsworn his criminal ways through the influence of his late wife. After initially declining the Kid's offer to join up and split the reward money, Munny reconsiders amidst his financial troubles and recruits a former associate and neighbor, Ned Logan (Morgan Freeman), as his partner before catching up with the Schofield Kid.

Back in Wyoming, English Bob (Harris) and his biographer W.W. Beauchamp get off a train and ride into Big Whiskey. English Bob ignores the sign that prohibits the possession of firearms and blatantly lies to a deputy about the revolver he carries in plain sight. Following a quick shave, he emerges onto the barber's porch and is confronted by five armed deputies and Little Bill, who remembers Bob from his gunfighting days. After disarming the gunfighter, Little Bill ruthlessly beats him in front of the townspeople, shouting ominous warnings about pursuing the prostitute's bounty. Little Bill then ridicules and insults the jailed English Bob for the benefit of his biographer. In one scene, Little Bill Daggett says, "Look son, being a good shot, being quick with a pistol, that don't do no harm, but it don't mean much next to being cool-headed. A man who will keep his head and not get rattled under fire, like as not, he'll kill ya. It ain't so easy to shoot a man anyhow, especially if the son-of-a-bitch is shootin' back at you." Finally, Little Bill deports English Bob with a warning that he will kill him should he return. The humiliated English Bob shouts and curses at the entire town and the American system as he is taken to the train station in a carriage.

Here is one exchange in the film.

Will Munny: I ain't like that no more. I ain't the same, Ned. Claudia, she straightened me up, cleared me of drinkin' whiskey and all. Just 'cause we're goin' on this killing, that don't mean I'm gonna go back to bein' the way I was. I just need the money, get a new start for them youngsters. Ned, you remember that drover I shot through the

mouth and his teeth came out the back of his head? I think about him now and again. He didn't do anything to deserve to get shot, at least nothin' I could remember when I sobered up.

Ned Logan: You were crazy, Will.

Will Munny: Yeah, no one liked me. Mountain boys all thought I was gonna shoot 'em out of pure meanness.

Ned Logan: Well, like I said, you ain't like that no more.

Will Munny: That's right. I'm just a fella now. I ain't no different than anyone else no more.

After a long way through wet, frigid weather, Munny, Logan and the Kid enter a saloon for a drink and inquire about the reward. Feverish and sick after the long wet ride, Munny remains at a table while Logan and the Kid go upstairs to be serviced by the prostitutes. While waiting downstairs for his friends, Little Bill arrives and confronts Munny. A town ordinance prohibits guns — upon entering town that stormy night, Munny failed (or chose not) to see the warning sign posted alongside the road. Weak from his illness, Munny is in no condition to fight back as Little Bill brutally beats him in full view of the patrons. Munny manages to drag himself out of the saloon as Ned Logan and the Kid escape through a second-story window. The three partners retreat to a barn outside of town.

Munny retreats and is nursed by his friends and the prostitutes, and after recovering sufficiently from his injuries, the three men ambush and kill one of the two cowboys in a canyon. It is at that point that Logan realizes he can no longer stomach murder, and decides to head home. Munny and the Kid find the other cowboy and Munny allows the eager Kid to shoot the man in an outhouse outside the isolated cabin where he had been holed up for safety.

Logan is captured and brought back to Little Bill, who beats all the information he can out of him, inadvertently killing Logan in the process. Logan's corpse is put on display in an open coffin outside the saloon as an example of frontier justice. Outside town, the Kid is shaken by the murder he has just committed and admits that it was his first kill; he renounces his planned gunfighting career. He tries to justify his guilt by claiming "Well, I guess he had it coming." "We all got it coming, Kid," returns Munny.

One of the prostitutes brings the reward money to Munny and tells him of the death of Logan. This angers Munny who, breaking his vow of sobriety, drinks half a bottle of whisky. In fear of Munny's reputation, the Kid refuses his share of the loot. Munny takes the Kid's pistols and rides into town to confront the sheriff, after giving the money to the Kid to deliver his and Logan's share to Logan's widow and Munny's children.

That night, Munny quietly walks into the crowded Greeley's Saloon. Inside the saloon, Little Bill has assembled a posse to pursue Munny and the Kid. Munny demands to see the saloon's owner while holding them all at bay with a shotgun. When Skinny, the owner, identifies himself, Munny shoots him with one of the two barrels. Little Bill curses Munny, as he states that Skinny was unarmed. Munny replies, "Well, he should have armed himself if he's gonna decorate his saloon with my friend".

Munny trains the other chamber of the shotgun on Little Bill, but the gun misfires and Little Bill commands the others to shoot Munny. A gun fight ensues where Munny kills three posse members outright and seriously wounds Little Bill and another deputy.

Munny has a short encounter with Little Bill's erstwhile biographer, who is scared witless, yet amazed and admiring of Munny's cool dispatch of armed men. Here is one exchange. Beauchamp leaves having finally, after false starts with English Bob and Little Bill, found the real western anti-hero he has sought to document in his penny pamphlets. Munny hears Little Bill cocking his pistol. Munny steps on Little Bill's hand and points the rifle directly into his face. Little Bill realizes what is to follow and states, "I don't deserve this...to die like this." Munny replies, "Deserve's got nothing to do with it." Little Bill then says, "I'll see you in Hell, William Munny," to which Munny whispers, "Yeah", and shoots Little Bill dead. Here is one exchange.

W.W. Beauchamp: Who, uh, who'd you kill first?

Will Munny: Huh?

W.W. Beauchamp: When confronted by superior numbers, an experienced gunfighter will always fire on the best shot first.

Will Munny: Is that so?

W.W. Beauchamp: Yeah, Little Bill told me that. And you probably killed him first, didn't you?

Will Munny: I was lucky in the order, but I've always been lucky when it comes to killin' folks.

W.W. Beauchamp: And so, who was next? It was Clyde, right? You must have killed Clyde. Well, it could have been Deputy Andy. Wasn't it? Or, or...

[Will points the rifle in his face]

Will Munny: All I can tell you is who's gonna be last.

[Beauchamp quickly exits out the front door]

Munny heads to the door, shooting the last injured deputy without bothering to aim. After shouting threats of wanton violence through the open door to anyone who might be outside waiting for him, he leaves the saloon and rides away on a gray horse, unmolested by the frightened townspeople, who recoil in fear, glad to see him ride out.

The film ends with an epilogue that echoes its introduction: "Some years later, Mrs. Ansonia Feathers made the arduous journey to Hodgeman County, Kansas to visit the last resting place of her only daughter. William Munny had long since disappeared with the children... some said to San Francisco where it was rumored he prospered in dry goods. And there was nothing on the marker to explain to Mrs. Feathers why her only daughter had married a known thief and murderer, a man of notoriously vicious and intemperate disposition."

## Malcolm X – 1992 Movie

*Malcolm X* is a 1992 movie. It received a PG-13 rating. It has a running time of 201 minutes. It made \$47 million. The movie stars Denzel Washington (nominated for best actor in Academy and Golden Globe, won best actor for New York Film Critic and Berlin International Film Festival), Angela Bassett, Albert Hall, Al Freeman Jr, and Delroy Lindo. It won best picture for at CHI and received a nomination from National Board of Review. Spike Lee was the director.

Malcolm X (born Malcolm Little; May 19, 1925 – February 21, 1965), also known as El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, was an American Black Muslim minister and a one-time spokesman for the Nation of Islam. After leaving the Nation of Islam in 1964, he

made the pilgrimage, the Hajj, to Mecca and became a Sunni Muslim. He also founded the Muslim Mosque, Inc. and the Organization of Afro-American Unity. Less than a year later, he was assassinated in Washington Heights on the first day of National Brotherhood Week.

In early 1946, Malcolm returned to Boston. On January 12, he was arrested for burglary trying to steal a stolen watch he had left for repairs at a jewelry shop. Two days later, Malcolm was indicted for carrying firearms. On January 16, he was charged with Grand Larceny and Breaking and Entering. Malcolm was sentenced to eight to ten years in Massachusetts State Prison. On February 27, Malcolm began serving his sentence at the Massachusetts State Prison in Charlestown. While in prison, Malcolm earned the nickname of "Satan" for his vitriolic hatred towards the Bible, God and religion in general. Malcolm began reading books from the prison library. Soon he developed a voracious appetite for reading, then astigmatism. His brother Reginald wrote letters describing his experience with the Nation of Islam, and Malcolm decided to convert. For the remainder of his incarceration, Malcolm maintained regular contact with Elijah Muhammad, the group's leader. Malcolm started to gain fame among the prisoners but also remained under the eye of the authorities. They recognized in him a force that could potentially foment trouble and did not grant him the expected early release after five years. In February 1948, mostly through his sister's efforts, Malcolm was transferred to an experimental prison in Norfolk, Massachusetts, a facility that had a much larger library. Malcolm later reflected on his time in prison: "Months passed without my even thinking about being imprisoned. In fact, up to then, I had never been so truly free in my life." On August 7, 1952, Malcolm received parole and was released from prison.

In 1954, Malcolm was selected to lead the Nation of Islam's Temple Number Seven on Lenox Avenue in Harlem. He rapidly expanded its membership. After a local television broadcast in New York City about the Nation of Islam, a wider audience knew Malcolm. Representatives of the print media, radio, and television frequently asked Malcolm for comments on issues. Reporters from other countries also sought him as a spokesperson.

In 1958, Malcolm married Betty X (née Sanders) in Lansing, Michigan. They had six daughters, all of whom carried the family name of Shabazz. Their names were Attallah, born in 1958; Qubilah, born in 1960; Ilyasah, born in 1962; Gamilah (also spelled Gumilah), born in 1964; and twins, Malaak and Malikah, born after Malcolm's death in 1965.

In September 1960, Malcolm met with Fidel Castro during Castro's visit to the United Nations in New York. Malcolm was a prominent member of a Harlem-based welcoming committee made up of black community leaders that greeted heads of state, particularly those from African countries, who had come to New York to address the UN General Assembly.

In early 1963, Malcolm started collaborating with Alex Haley on *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. The book had not been finalized at the time of Malcolm's assassination in 1965. Haley completed it and published it later that year.

Writing after his break from the Nation of Islam, Malcolm said in the *Autobiography* that one reason for the separation was growing tension between him and Elijah Muhammad that arose from Malcolm's dismay at rumors of Muhammad's extramarital affairs with young secretaries. These rumors troubled Malcolm because the

Nation of Islam condemns adultery. At first Malcolm brushed these rumors aside. Later, he spoke with Elijah Muhammad's son and the women making the accusations and he came to believe them. According to the Autobiography, in 1963 Elijah Muhammad confirmed the rumors to Malcolm. Muhammad justified his actions by saying they followed a pattern established by Biblical prophets.

Malcolm criticized the 1963 March on Washington, which he called "the farce on Washington". He said he did not know why black people were excited over a demonstration "run by whites in front of a statue of a president who has been dead for a hundred years and who didn't like us when he was alive."

When asked for a comment about the assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963, Malcolm said that it was a case of "the chickens coming home to roost." He added that "Chickens coming home to roost never made me sad. It only made me glad." This remark prompted a widespread public outcry. The Nation of Islam publicly censured their former shining star. Although Malcolm retained his post and rank as minister, Elijah Muhammad banned him from public speaking for 90 days.

Malcolm publicly announced his break from the Nation of Islam on March 8, 1964. He founded the Muslim Mosque, Inc. four days later. Malcolm stayed close to some of the teachings of the Nation of Islam but began modifying them. He explicitly advocated political and economic black nationalism, as opposed to the Nation of Islam's religious nationalism. In April, he made a speech titled "The Ballot or the Bullet." Malcolm was in contact with several orthodox Muslims, who encouraged him to learn about orthodox Islam. He soon converted to orthodox Islam, and decided to make his pilgrimage to Mecca.

On April 13, 1964, Malcolm departed JFK Airport, New York for Cairo by way of Frankfurt. It was the second time Malcolm had been to Africa. On the next leg of his journey, Malcolm left Cairo for Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Saudi authorities because of his inability to speak Arabic and his United States passport questioned his status as an authentic Muslim. Since only confessing Muslims are allowed into Mecca, he was separated from the group with which he arrived and was isolated. He spent about 20 hours wearing the ihram, a two-piece garment comprising two white unhemmed sheets.

Roger Ebert notes that this film helped him understand how we do have the power to change our own lives and how fate does not deal all the cards. He calls the film inspirational and educational.

The hero was born Malcolm Little. His father was a minister who preached the beliefs of Marcus Garvey, the African-American leader who taught that white America would never accept black people and that their best hope lay in returning to Africa. Years later, Malcolm would also become a minister and teach a variation on this theme, but first he had to go through a series of identities and conversions and hard lessons of life.

Victimized by violence the Klan probably murdered his father. They earlier burned down the family house. His mother was unable to support her children, and Malcolm was parceled out to a foster home.

He was the brightest student in his classes but was steered away from ambitious career choices by white teachers who told him that, as a Negro, he should look for something where he could "work with his hands." One of his early jobs was as a Pullman porter, and then, in Harlem, he became a numbers runner and small-time gangster.

During that stage of his life, in the late 1940s, he was known as "Detroit Red," and ran with a fast crowd - including white women who joined him for sex and burglaries. Arrested and convicted, he was sentenced to prison; the movie quotes him that he got one year for the burglaries and seven years for associating with white women while committing them. Prison was the best thing that happened to Red, who fell into the orbit of the Black Muslim movement of Elijah Muhammad and learned self-respect.

The movie then follows Malcolm as he sheds his last name - the legacy, the Muslims preached, of slave-owners - and becomes a fiery street-corner preacher who quickly rises until he is the most charismatic figure in the Black Muslims, teaching that whites are the devil and that blacks must become independent and self-sufficient.

The movie shows the hatred that Black Muslims have toward white people. They generate this hate through a myth of the origins of slavery. As horrendous as the American practice of slavery was, they never mentioned that African tribes warred against each other and sold defeated tribes into slavery. It also shows the mythical source of prostitution, alcohol, and drugs in white people, rather than accepting responsibility for what occurred in the black community. It shows the anti-Jewish perspective of black Muslims. It shows the hatred that he had toward the NAACP and toward Martin Luther King, Jr. The movie shows the complicity of many white Christians in support of the KKK and the denigration of black people. The movie shows the difficulty that many black Americans will have in identifying with the American way of life, especially from early colonial days and the founding of the nation.

A revealing scene (Chapter 34) in "Malcolm X" shows Malcolm on the campus of Columbia University, where a young white girl tells him that she is well intentioned and that she supports his struggle. "What can I do to help?" she asks. "Nothing," Malcolm says coldly, and walks on. His single word could have been the punch line for the scene, but Lee sees more deeply, and ends the scene with the hurt on the young woman's face. There will be a time, later in Malcolm's life, when he will have a different answer to her question. In his autobiography, he would say the following.

"I realized racism isn't just a black and white problem. It's brought bloodbaths to about every nation on earth at one time or another. Brother, remember the time that white college girl came into the restaurant — the one who wanted to help the [Black] Muslims and the whites get together — and I told her there wasn't a ghost of a chance and she went away crying? Well, I've lived to regret that incident. In many parts of the African continent I saw white students helping black people. Something like this kills a lot of argument. I did many things as a [Black] Muslim that I'm sorry for now. I was a zombie then — like all [Black] Muslims — I was hypnotized, pointed in a certain direction and told to march. Well, I guess a man's entitled to make a fool of himself if he's ready to pay the cost. It cost me 12 years. That was a bad scene, brother. The sickness and madness of those days — I'm glad to be free of them."

However, there was still another conversion ahead. In this scene (Chapter 40-41), he conducts a pilgrimage to Mecca. People ask his name. He develops relationships with Arabs. He visits the pyramids. He hears someone chanting the Koran. He writes home from Saudi Arabia that he had never seen such genuine hospitality. He went through the ritual washing. He worshipped with people whose eyes were blue and hair was white. We

were one humanity. Racism will lead to suicide. My hateful words to white people hurt people who did nothing to deserve to be hurt. Muslims of many colors embraced him and he returned to America convinced that there were good people of peace in all races.

Racism is a disease.

Not long after, in 1965, he was assassinated - probably by members of the Muslim sect he had broken with. It is revealing that even Martin Luther King Jr., seen in documentary footage making a statement about Malcolm's death, hardly seems overcome with grief. He referred to the assassination as an unfortunate tragedy. He also said that it reminds us that some people express their dissent through murder. The irony, of course, is that while he preached against white people, black people killed him.

Tensions increased between Malcolm and the Nation of Islam. It was alleged that orders were given by leaders of the Nation of Islam to "destroy" Malcolm; in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, he says that as early as 1963, a member of the Seventh Temple confessed to him having received orders from the Nation of Islam to kill him.

On March 20, 1964, *Life* published a photograph of Malcolm holding an M1 Carbine and pulling back the curtains to peer out of the window of his family's home. The photo was taken in connection with Malcolm's declaration that he would defend himself from the daily death threats that he and his family were receiving. Undercover FBI informants warned officials that he had been marked for assassination.

In June 1964, the NOI sued to reclaim Malcolm's home in Queens, which they claimed belonged to the organization. The suit was successful, and Malcolm and his family were ordered to vacate the house. On February 14, 1965, the night before a scheduled hearing to postpone the eviction date, the house burned to the ground. Malcolm and his family survived, and no one was charged with any crime.

On February 21, 1965 in Manhattan's Audubon Ballroom, Malcolm had just begun delivering a speech when a disturbance broke out in the crowd of 400. A man yelled, "Get your hand outta my pocket! Don't be messin' with my pockets!" As Malcolm and his bodyguards moved to quiet the disturbance, a man rushed forward and shot Malcolm in the chest with a sawed-off shotgun. Two other men charged the stage and fired handguns at Malcolm, who was shot 16 times. Angry onlookers in the crowd caught and beat the assassins as they attempted to flee the ballroom. Malcolm was pronounced dead on arrival at New York's Columbia Presbyterian Hospital.

## **Leap of Faith – 1992 Movie**

*Leap of Faith* is a 1992 romance and comedy. It runs 108 minutes. It received a PG-13 rating. It made \$21.7 million in the USA. It stars Steve Martin as revival preacher Jonas Nightengale, Debra Winger as Jane, Lolita Davidovich as the waitress Marva, and Liam Neeson as the sheriff Will. The film owes something to two earlier films made about evangelical con-men, "The Rainmaker" (1956), starring Burt Lancaster and Katharine Hepburn, and the 1960 "Elmer Gantry" directed by Richard Brooks and starring Burt Lancaster (once again) and Jean Simmons. Along the same theme of spiritual hucksters is "Uforia" (1980) with Cindy Williams and Harry Dean Stanton, and the documentary "Marjoe" (1972) directed by Howard Smith and Sarah Kernochan.

As the movie opens, one of the trucks breaks down with engine trouble, and they pull off into a Southwestern backwater to throw a few unscheduled shows until



replacement parts arrive. It seems like an ordinary enough town. He does not realize it is his personal crossroads. At first, he is just trying to rip some more people off.

In one scene (19:18 to 23:15) the trucks move into place and the tent is raised, the people arrive and the high-tech communication from the bus dictates Nightengale's every move. Nightengale unveils the crucifix that cries, curing people on cue from the command center. The choir sings in the background.

The caravan comes tooling down the highway, a couple of custom buses and big semis, carrying salvation to the needy. It is a high-tech revival show, starring Jonas Nightengale, faith healer and preacher, who can pick a stranger at random out of his audience, and tell him the most amazing things about himself. Then he takes up a collection. The movie at least suggests a way that the high-tech age allows an evangelist to fabricate miracles on demand. Some court cases have convicted faith healers of using computerized databases, informers and overheard conversations to gather miraculous insights into the innocents in their congregations. There is a tiny earpiece in the preacher's ear, so that a backstage helper can whisper instructions: "Woman in red, sixth row aisle seat . . . has back problems."

Jane is backstage at the computer, the wizard of this particular Oz. Like her boss, she sees the show as good honest entertainment. People pay their money, and they leave with a few laughs, a few tears, some great music, and maybe a little more hope than they walked in with. Where is the harm in that? When the local sheriff tries to shut down the show because times are hard, the drought is killing the crops, and people do not have money to throw away on con men, it's Jane's job to charm him. She tries to. He charms her, too, and it is clear that in another time and another place, they could easily fall in love. Yet, it might not happen this time.

The preacher meets someone in the town, too: a waitress with a crippled young son. He sees her as a conquest, or, maybe as something more. The boy sees the preacher as a man who can possibly heal his crippled leg. The preacher tries to warn him off. He tries to give the kid a break. He knows the truth about his own miracles, or thinks he does.

The preacher slowly becomes attached to the good people of this town. He is angry because this just has not been his nature. Then he accepts and in the end does the only thing he feels he has left to do to make things right.

## **Slacker – 1991 movie**

*Slacker* is a 1991 now classic movie. It runs 97 minutes. It received an R rating for profanity. Richard Linklater received a nomination from Independent Spirit Award for best director and best first feature.

Richard Linklater made a movie about social outcasts who do not quite know what to do with their lives. He wants to show us a certain strata of campus life at the present time - a group of people he calls "slackers," although anyone who has ever lived in a campus town will also recognize them under such older names as beatniks, hippies, bohemians, longhairs, peaceniks, weirdos or the Union Regulars (for surely every campus with a student union also has a seemingly permanent body of current and former students who hang around all day drinking free coffee refills and wondering whether life as they know it exists outside the union). Early in the film, a taxi driver picks up a fare

(Linklater), who hangs over the back seat and expounds at length on his theory that every time you think of a possibility, that possibility becomes a separate reality on some other level of existence. The taxi driver is not much interested. He drops off his fare just as a car speeds away and some passersby find a woman hit-and-run victim in the street. As help is called, the camera moves in a leisurely circle until it regards a rooming house just as the same hit-and-run car pulls up in front of it. We join the driver of this car in his flat, until he is arrested by police and charged with running down his mother. Then, outside again, we follow some passersby until they . . . And so on. Linklater moves through an apparently unlinked assortment of people, including a thief who is buttonholed by his victim and taken for a walk; a man who "knows" that one of the moon astronauts saw an alien spacecraft, but his radio transmission was cut off by NASA; a woman who owns a vial containing the results of an intimate medical procedure carried out on Madonna, and various folk singers, strollers, diners, sleepers, paranoids, do-gooders, quarreling couples, friends, lovers, children and conspiracy theorists. We don't get a story, but we do get a feeling. We are listening in on a whole stratum of American life that never gets paid attention to in the movies - the people who believe the things they read in magazines sold in places that smell like Vitamin B. They have special knowledge, occult beliefs, and revolutionary health practices. They know they are being lied to. Listen to them and you will learn how things really are. In a sense, Linklater has invented his whole style in order to listen to these people. He doesn't want to go anywhere with them. He doesn't need a car chase to wrap things up. He is simply amused.

The point is not really what is said, but the tone of voice, the word choices, the conversational strategies, the sense of life going on all the time, everywhere, all over town. Roger Ebert notes that in a conventional Hollywood movie, as the brain-dead characters repeat the few robotic phrases permitted them by the formulas of the screenplay, they walk down streets and sometimes he yearns to just peel away from them, cut across a lawn, walk through the wall of a house, and enter the spontaneous lives of the people living there. "Slacker" is a movie that grants itself that freedom.

In one scene (59:00 to 1:05:30), The Old Man tells a robber his deepest regrets, his repenting of not giving himself to life's beauty completely. He takes the gun away, and tells the robber that he can take anything he wants. He hates the police as much as the robber did. They talk about the polish anarchist who shot McKinley, a man who acted on his belief. He wants to blow up the Texas legislature. He has given up on humanity. Everything he told him was a lie. At the end, he quotes from something he has copied, to the true warrior. "To those humans in whom I have faith. I wish suffering, being forsaken, sickness, maltreatment, humiliation. I wish that they should not remain unfamiliar with profound self-contempt, the torture of self-mistrust, and the misery of the vanquished. I have no pity for them because I wish them the only thing that can prove today whether one is worth anything or not: That one endures." I discovered this note was from Nietzsche, in his notes of 1887, quoted in Kaufmann, p. 456.

## **Regarding Henry – 1991 Movie**

*Regarding Henry* is a 1991 movie of the drama category. It stars Harrison Ford as Henry and Annette Bening as his wife. It received a PG-13 rating. It made \$41 million in the United States.

The movie opens with a portrait of a Manhattan lawyer as a driven, ambitious man who lives in great wealth and little happiness. He is a taciturn taskmaster who treats his young daughter as if she were a balky client and his wife as a partner with whom he is friendly, but not intimate. Then a catastrophe occurs. He steps out one night to buy some cigarettes, and is shot in a holdup. One of the bullets penetrates his brain, and for weeks he drifts in a coma, until finally he awakens and the long process of rehabilitation can begin. The movie is essentially about how Henry becomes more lovable and human because of his injury - how his soul is healed and his family saved by the experience. The movie is about how a man becomes a child, and the change is for the better. After the grievous wound to his brain, Henry recovers into an altogether more pleasant person. He can remember almost nothing of his previous life, to be sure, and has to take it on trust that he has this wife and daughter. But with the directness of a child he values honesty and loyalty, two qualities the old Henry was not familiar with.

In one scene (41:00 to 41:51), Henry has just said that he does not know his wife and daughter. He does not want to go home. His daughter enters his hospital room. He is trying to tie his shoe, but cannot. She approaches him. "Big loop, little loop, cross over, and pull through." Henry says, "How did you how to do that?" "You taught me," she says. "It was gray carpet. I remember gray carpet. Where was that?" "That was home." Henry then enters the office of the doctor. "I remember gray carpet. I want to go home."

## **The Doctor – 1991 Movie**

The 1991 movie, *The Doctor*, has William Hurt as a surgeon. He begins the movie confident as a surgeon. He tells his student surgeons that they are like mechanics, tinkering with the part of the body that does not work, get out, and go to the next patient. Then, through his own experience as a patient because of throat cancer, he undergoes a change. He begins to see the hospital experience from the perspective of a patient. Through this change, he tells his student surgeons that the patient is scared, sick, vulnerable, and most of all, wants to get well. They put their lives in our hands. Toward the end of the movie, he says, "I can tell you about this, but it will not make any difference." He wants them to have the experience of being a patient. He tells the student surgeons to put on the patient gowns that open in the back. He will help them experience life in the hospital as a patient.

## **Mr. Destiny – 1990 Movie**

*Mr. Destiny* is a 1990 romantic comedy with sci-fi elements. It runs 110 minutes, receiving a PG-13 rating. It made \$15.3 million in the USA. It stars James Belushi as Larry, Michael Caine as a bartender-God, Linda Hamilton is the wife of Larry, and Rene Russo is the rich daughter of the boss. Touchstone Pictures Presents a film directed by James Orr. James Orr and Jim Cruickshank wrote and produced it. David Newman produced the music.

It has a similar theme to that of "It's a Wonderful Life" and "A Christmas Carol." It might remind others of "Chances Are." This simple fable grows, rather slowly, with no big payoff in comedy and surprises. Yet, I find myself drawn to the film. The story involves an ungrateful man being taken on a guided tour of his life, and seeing some of

the other ways it could have turned out. The story of Larry's life involves a man who becomes a mid-level executive at a company where his superior married the boss' daughter. Larry married a girl who consoled him after he struck out in the ill-fated championship game.

The tour guide is a bartender, a genial soul in an obscure tavern in an unfamiliar part of town. A businessperson named Larry wanders into the bar after his car breaks down, and he is in a mood to grumble to the bartender about the way his life is turning out. It all started to go wrong, he moans, when he was the last man at bat in the final game of the state baseball championship, and he struck out. If only he had belted that last pitch out of the park, he believes, everything would have been different, and better. The bartender listens and nods and pours him another drink, and because business is slow (Larry is the only customer this particular bar may ever have), he does the poor guy a favor: He puts his life on fast-reverse, lets him hit the winning run, and then shows him how things would have turned out. One wonders if the bartender is God. If so, God is someone who happens to be omnipotent and does not mind doing a favor for a stranger. After the initial shock of seeing his new home and family, the bartender explains what has happened. In one scene, (34:46 to 35:27), Larry asks, "How can my life change so much because of one stinkin baseball?" The bartender responds, "You see, Larry, one's destiny is a very complicated thing. Every incident in a person's life affects everything else that follows it. Instead of missing the baseball, you hit it. Then you became a hero, married the prom queen and so on and so forth, until you find yourself exactly where you are. So you see, hitting that baseball has spun your life off in an entirely new direction." Larry wonders if the bartender is angel or God. Here is the explanation the bartender provides for who is (35:38 to 36:10). "Have you ever been faced with a decision, and you weren't sure what to do? And then something inside you made you choose one direction over another? So, that's me. I make the suggestions, and you make the choices. That's how destiny works, Larry, very subtly. Welcome to your new life, Larry. I hope you like it." In the alternative lifeline revealed to him, Larry marries the boss' daughter and becomes the boss, and his former superior is his underling, and is married to the consoling girl. Larry remembers who he was in his "other" life, but everyone else thinks he or she is really in the alternative lifeline. That generates some funny situations, as when Larry realizes he now is married to the sextop, or when he tries to convince his "real" wife that they once were married. At the close of their great evening together (1:21:49 to 1:22:44) standing at the door to her home, she says, "Good Night, Mr. Burrows." "Larry, please." "I had a fun evening. Thanks." "I did to. Brought back a lot of good memories. Well, good night." He wants away. She stops him, "Larry, if we had such a great life together, why did you want it changed?" "I guess I just didn't know what I had."

According to Roger Ebert, someone in the movie needed to pick up the tempo, although Belushi did well.

## **Edward Scissorhands – 1990 Movie**

*Edward Scissorhands*, a movie released in 1990, is a fantasy tale about an imaginative young man who has scissors for hands. The story is by Tim Burton, who often has a wonderful pictorial flair combined with weak story and weak characters. In

this story, Edward, played by Johnny Depp, is a strangely remote hero. As a fairy tale, Edward is more like a silent movie clown.

The movie takes place in an entirely artificial world, where a haunting gothic castle crouches on a mountaintop high above a storybook suburb, a goofy sitcom neighborhood where all of the houses are shades of pastels and all of the inhabitants seem to be emotional clones of the Jetsons. The warmest and most human resident of this suburb is the Avon lady (Dianne Wiest), who comes calling one day at the castle, show that not even its forbidding facade can deter her. The only occupant is a lonely young man named Edward. His story, told in a flashback, is a sad one. He was created by a mad inventor (Vincent Price), who was almost finished with his task when he died, leaving Edward with temporary scissors in place of real hands. One look at Edward and we see that scissors are inconvenient substitutes for fingers: His face is a mass of scars, and he tends to shred everything he tries to pick up. The Avon lady is not fazed. She bundles Edward into her car and drives him back down the mountain to join her family, which includes daughter Kim (Winona Ryder) and husband Bill (Alan Arkin). The neighbors in this suburb are insatiably curious, led by a nosy neighbor named Joyce (Kathy Baker). The movie then develops into a series of situations that seem inspired by silent comedy, as when Edward tries to pick up a pea.

When he joins the “normal” world, the people admire him at first and then turn against him. In one scene (0:44:37 to 0:45:35, 0:47:35 to 51:46), Edward begins helping people with his scissorhands. The people grow in their admiration of him as he designs the hedges of their lawns, the design of their dogs, and the cut of their hair. Later (1:13:33 to 1:14:09), the women turn hostile to Edward because of the deceit of another neighbor, Jim. They want nothing to do with him, all because they made assumptions about Edward that were not true.

## **Pretty Woman – 1990 Movie**

*Pretty Woman* is a 1990 movie in which Julia Roberts won an academy award for best actress. She starred with Richard Gere. Given the theme and the stars, one might be surprised that the story is actually a rather sweet love story. It could have gone down mean streets and plenty of degrading behavior. Instead, it glows with romance.

Edward is an out of town millionaire visiting Los Angeles. He meets Vivian because he cannot drive his rented standard shift automobile and because he needs directions. He has broken up with his girl friend. He invites her to his room, not for sex, of course, but to talk, although the talk with cost him.

The movie is a rags to riches story. When she accepts his offer to keep him company for a week for \$3000, she says, “I am going to treat you so good, you will not want to give me up.” He responds, “I will pay you your \$3000, and I will give you up.” After he closes the door, she says, “But, I am here now.” This very rich man seems almost soulless because he buys companies and then breaks them up and resells them for a profit just because he can. She asks, “But what about the people who work for those companies?” “People have nothing to do with it,” he explains. “It's strictly business.” “Oh, she says. Then you do the same thing I do.”

In such scenes, the characters emerge as believable, original and sympathetic. Edward and Vivian feel comfortable with each other. The catch is, neither one trusts the

feeling of comfort. They have been hurt so often, they depend on a facade of cynical detachment. Think of the movement of the story. Everything is business. He offers her money to spend one week with him, she accepts, he buys her clothes, they have sex and of course (this being the movies) they fall in love. Yet, they fall into a particularly romantic kind of love, a love based on staying awake after the lights are out and confiding autobiographical secrets. During the day, the lovers try to recover their cold detachment, to maintain the distance between them. Roger Ebert observes that if Cinderella inspires the love story in "Pretty Woman," the daytime scenes are "Pygmalion," as the hotel manager takes a liking to his best customer's "niece" and tutors her on which fork to use at a formal dinner.

There is a subplot involving Edward's attempts to take over a corporation run by an aging millionaire, James Morse, a man whose lifework he is prepared to savage, even though he actually likes him. There are broad Freudian hints that Edward's entire career is a form of revenge against his father and that Bellamy may be the father figure he is searching for. However, he has an impulse to hurt what he loves. One particularly painful scene is when Edward reveals to a friend that Vivian is a prostitute and Vivian gains a certain insight by how hurtful that betrayal is.

A final scene involving a limousine, a fire escape and some flowers is awkward and feels tacked on. Yet, by the end of the movie, most of us romantics are happy to have it close as it does.

Roger Ebert observes that Garry Marshall directed the movie with an instinctive good nature, making it about as warmhearted as a movie about two cold realists can possibly be. He understands that earlier versions of the screenplay were more hard-boiled and downbeat, and that Marshall underlined the romance.

In one scene (51:35 to 55:30), Edward takes Vivian with him to have dinner with James Morse and his son. The purpose of the dinner is to discuss a hostile takeover of Morse's company. Vivian tries to act proper. She tries to figure out the silverware. He orders her escargot. In trying to eat the snails, one flies off the plate. Mr. Morse wants Edward to leave his company alone. However, when Edward informs Mr. Morse that a government contract is delayed, son and father get up to leave. The son says it was a pleasure to meet her, and the Mr. Morse wishes her good luck.

## **Dances with Wolves – 1990 Movie**

*Dances With Wolves*, which won Best Picture in 1990, along with six other awards, is the story of a Union officer during the Civil War who asks to be posted to the western frontier but finds it deserted when he gets there. In the opening scene, (1:17 to 3:26) the Kevin Costner character is bleeding from wounds during the Civil War. The doctor who is supposed to operate goes for a break, since no gangrene has set in. He intends to cut off his leg. To avoid this, the Costner character slips on his boot, and snaps his leg into place by putting his boots on. During this scene, one sees the suffering that happens on the battlefield. Later, (23:27 to 27:10); he arrives at the deserted fort, where his partner declares that nothing is there. Yet, he finds the US Army supplies that had been left behind. He decides to stay. This is his post. The Costner character will live alone in the prairie, relating to nature, animals, and the Native Americans. He adapts and grows as a human being.

## Jesus of Montreal – 1990 Movie

*Jesus of Montreal* is a 1990 movie. It received an R rating. It runs 120 minutes. It made \$20,388 in the USA. It stars Lothaire Bluteau in the Christ figure role. It received a nomination for best foreign language film in 1989 in the Academy awards, Golden Globe, and in 1990 for the National Board of Review. It won many awards in the Genie Awards.

The movie is an ironic, postmodern retelling of the story of Jesus in modern times. An actor playing Jesus in a retelling of the Passion Play finds his life imitating his character's.

The Passion Play has been a success for more than 40 years in the famous Montreal basilica, but the passage of time has made it seem old-fashioned, and modern audiences are growing restless. It is time for an overhaul. The priest in charge hires some new actors - younger, more inventive - to stage a revised and updated version. They make the mistake of taking their material literally.

The common observation is that the teachings of Christ would be radical and subversive, if anyone ever took them literally. They would be profoundly offensive to those who build their kingdoms in this world and not in the next. The actors who rewrite the Passion in "Jesus of Montreal" create a play that is good theater and perhaps even good theology, but it is not good public relations. Although audiences respond well and the reviews are good, the church authorities are reluctant to offend the establishment by presenting such an unorthodox reading of the sacred story. They order them to tone down the play.

However, by the time they act, a curious thing has happened to the actors. They have come to believe in their play. The roles they play shape them. "Jesus of Montreal" does not try to force a parallel between the Passion of Christ and the experiences of these actors. Yet certain similarities do appear, and Daniel, the actor who plays Christ, discovers that his own life is taking on some of the aspects of Christ's. By the end of the film, we have arrived at a crucifixion scene that actually plays as drama and not simply as something someone has forced onto the script.

Many of the scenes have obvious parallels in the New Testament. In one, an actress from the troupe appears at an audition for a TV commercial and is asked to take off her clothes - not because nudity is required in the commercial, but more because the casting director wants to exercise his power. Arriving late at the audition, Daniel, the Christ figure, shouts out to his friend to leave her clothes on. Then, when the advertising people try to have him ejected, he goes into a rage, overturning lights and cameras. It is a version, of course, of Jesus and the moneylenders in the temple.

Another way in which "Jesus of Montreal" parallels the life of Christ is in the way a community grows up around its central figure. Filled with a vision they believe in, nourished by the courage to carry on in the face of the authorities, these actors persist in presenting their play even in the face of religious and legal opposition.

It is an original and uncompromising attempt to explore what really might happen, if the spirit of Jesus were to walk among us in these timid and materialistic times.

In chapter 4, he finds two actors doing the voice over for an X-rated film to act for him the play.

In chapter 5, Daniel finds the priest who hired him to write a new passion play sleeping with a woman.

In chapter 6, a man narrates the origin and end of the universe according to big bang theory, concluding with "The universe began without man, and it will end without man."

In chapter 8, the actors that Daniel has selected sit around a table, talking about tragedy can be bad luck.

## **Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade – 1989 Movie**

*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* is a 1989 movie. It runs 125 minutes. It received a PG-13 rating. It stars Harrison Ford and Sean Connery. A Film Directed By Steven Spielberg. Executive Producers George Lucas And Frank Marshall. Written By Jeffrey Boam. Edited By Michael Kahn. Photographed By Douglas Slocombe. Music By John Williams. It made \$197.1 million in the USA and \$494 million world wide.

The Jones movies have defined a familiar world of death-defying stunts, virtuoso chases, dry humor and the quest for impossible goals in unthinkable places.

Roger Ebert notes that when "Raiders of the Lost Ark" appeared, it defined a new energy level for adventure movies; it was a delirious breakthrough.

Even in this third adventure, some of the key elements are recycled from "Raiders." This time, Indy's quest is to find the Holy Grail, the cup Jesus Christ is said to have used at the Last Supper. (To drink from the cup is to have eternal youth.) The Holy Grail reminds us of the Ark of the Covenant in the first film, and in both cases, Nazi villains join the chase.

The new element this time is how Spielberg fills in some of the past of the Jones character. We learn his real name, and we meet his father, Professor Henry Jones, who is played by Sean Connery. Like the fathers of classic boys' stories, Dr. Jones is not a parent so much as a grown-up ally, an older pal who lacks three dimensions because children are unable to see their parents in that complexity. One might be reminded of the father in the Hardy Boys books, who shook his head and smiled at the exploits of his lovable lads and only rarely "expressed concern" or "cautioned them sternly." Since the Hardy Boys were constantly involved, at a tender age, with an endless series of counterfeiters, car thieves, kidnap rings, Nazi spies and jewel thieves, their father's detachment seemed either saintly or mad - and Connery has fun with some of the same elements.

Harrison Ford is Indiana Jones again this time, and what he does seems so easy, so deadpan, that few other actors could maintain such a straight and credible presence in the midst of such chaos. The young Indy discovers his life's mission in the early scenes. The central story takes place years later, when desperadoes kidnap Dr. Jones, the world's leading expert on the Holy Grail, because they believe he knows the secret of where it is now hidden. He does. Indy, working from his father's notebook, follows a trail from America to the watery catacombs beneath Venice, and then to the deserts of the Holy Land, where there is a sensational chase scene involving a gigantic Nazi armored tank. Dr. Elsa Schneider (Alison Doody), an art historian he meets in Venice, accompanies him on his mission.



Spielberg devises several elaborate set-pieces, of which Roger Ebert especially liked the rat-infested catacombs and sewers beneath Venice.

The following is a synopsis of the plot.

The prologue depicts a young Indiana Jones serving as a boy scout in Utah. He steals the Cross of Coronado (an ornamental cross belonging to Francisco V'squez de Coronado) from grave robbers, as he believes it should be in a museum instead of a private collection. As they give chase, Indiana hides in a circus train, in the process using a whip (scarring his chin), and gains his fear of snakes. Although he rescues the cross, the robbers tell the Sheriff that Indiana was the thief, and he is forced to return it, while his oblivious father, Henry Jones, is working on his research. One of the robbers, dressed very similarly to the future Indiana, gives him a fedora with some encouraging words. In 1938, an adult Indiana is on the robbers' ship, the Coronado, off the Portuguese coast, finally retrieving the Cross and donating it to Marcus Brody's museum.

Indiana meets the wealthy Walter Donovan, who informs him that his father vanished while searching for a clue to the location of the Holy Grail, using an incomplete stone tablet as his guide. Indy receives a special package that turns out to be his father's Grail diary in which he recorded all his findings and clues towards the Holy Grail. Understanding that his father would not have sent the Grail Diary — his father's life's work — to him unless he was in trouble, Indiana and Marcus travel to Venice. There they meet the beautiful and mysterious Dr. Elsa Schneider who had been working with Indiana's father. They retrace his father's footsteps, starting at the library where he was last seen. Using the diary, Indiana finds an X (inlaid in the floor) literally marking the spot, then smashes through the floor to ancient catacombs underneath, filled with oil several feet deep and infested with rats. Inside is the tomb of Sir Richard, a knight of the First Crusade, whose shield holds a complete version of the information on the tablet. The Brotherhood of the Cruciform Sword, a secretive and fanatical religious cult that protects the Holy Grail, set fire to the oil in the catacombs to kill Indiana and Elsa. Indiana overturns Richard's sarcophagus so that he and Elsa can take refuge inside from the flames, and emerge from a sewer grate in Venice outside the library. Indiana and Elsa commandeer a motorboat to escape, managing to fight off all but the cult's leader, Kazim, during the ensuing chase. Jones convinces Kazim that he is looking for his father, not the Grail, and Kazim reveals that his father is being held in Castle Brunwald near the Austrian-German border.

Indiana finds his father, but Schneider and Donovan betray them. They worked with the Nazis to stage Henry's kidnapping, so that Indiana would solve the mystery of the Grail for them. Elsa ties Indy and his father up from head to toe and then kisses Indy. Indiana and Henry have another impossible escape together.

Indy and Henry travel to Berlin to retrieve Henry's diary, which he reveals also contains the clues to evade three booby traps. They arrive at a pro-Nazi book-burning rally, where a disguised Indiana corners Elsa and convinces her to return the diary to him. In the process, he bumped into Adolf Hitler, who assumes the diary is an autograph book and signs the first page.

Indiana and Henry travel on an LZ-138 Zeppelin, which begins to turn around, letting Indiana realize the Nazis know they are on board. They escape the ship by taking an attached fighter plane, evading Nazi dogfighters. Henry accidentally shoots out the tailfin, and they crash land.

Indy and Henry steal a car, causing one Nazi plane to be destroyed when it follows them through a tunnel. On a beach, Henry uses his umbrella to stir up a flock of seagulls. The seagulls cause numerous bird strikes on the second plane, crashing it. The Joneses meet up with Sallah and confront the Nazis, who have captured Brody. The Brotherhood of the Cruciform Sword also appears, attacking the Nazi caravan, but are defeated. Henry attempts to rescue Brody from the tank wherein he is being held, but is himself captured. Indiana jumps onto the tank and rescues the captives before it drives off a cliff, killing Donovan's aide, Colonel Vogel.

The Joneses, Sallah, and Brody reach the Canyon of the Crescent Moon, in Hatay near İskenderun, the site of the temple housing the Grail. The Nazis capture them in the temple, and Donovan shoots Henry, forcing Indiana to retrieve the Grail, so as to heal his father's fatal wounds. Guided by the diary, Indiana circumvents the deadly booby traps. In one scene (1:47:04 to 1:48:58) Indy must take a leap of faith to cross to the other side. When he takes his step, a bridge appears.

In one scene (1:50:48 1:53:50 to 1:55:40), they reach a room where a knight of the First Crusade, kept alive by the power of the Grail, has hidden the Holy Grail among many false cups, while Donovan and Elsa follow. The knight informs them that, if they wish for the Grail, they must choose wisely for it, for while drinking from the true Grail will bring them everlasting life, a false Grail will take it from them. Schneider identifies a golden, bejeweled cup as the Grail, and Donovan impatiently drinks from it. Realizing the Grail is false, Donovan dies, aging rapidly into dust. Indiana picks out the true Grail, a plain cup with a gold interior, worthy of a humble carpenter (Jesus), and drinks from it, whereupon the knight advises him that he has chosen "wisely". Indiana fills the Grail with water and uses it to heal Henry.

Despite a warning from the knight not to let the Grail go past the Great Seal in accordance with the Law of God, Elsa tries to leave with the Grail and the interior starts to collapse. She loses her balance at the edge of a newly-formed crevasse; despite Indiana's attempts to lift her, she greedily reaches for the Grail and falls into the abyss. Indiana loses his footing and finds himself in the same situation, with his father keeping him from following the same fate as Elsa. He also tries to get the Grail, until Henry says simply, "Indiana! Indiana, let it go." Realizing that this is the first time his father has properly referred to him by name (rather than condescendingly calling him Junior), and that his father did not want to risk losing him even to retrieve the Grail, Indiana reluctantly obeys. The Grail and the old knight are left in the ruins as the Joneses, Brody, and Sallah escape the crumbling temple.

Afterward, Henry reveals that Indiana was the family dog's name, much to Sallah's amusement, and that Indiana's real name is Henry Jones, Jr. All four then ride off into the sunset.

## **Do the Right Thing – 1989 Movie**

*Do The Right Thing* is a 1989 movie. It runs 120 min. It received an R rating. The movie stars Danny Aiello (Sal, nominated for best supporting actor), Ossie Davis (Da Mayor), Ruby Dee (Mother Sister), Richard Edson (Vito), Giancarlo Esposito (Buggin Out), Spike Lee (Mookie), and Bill Nunn (Radio Raheem). The movie made \$25.9

million in the USA. Spike Lee received an Oscar nomination for best original screenplay and a Golden Globe nomination for best director and best screenplay.

In what follows, beware of cussing. That is the type of film it is.

The song "Fight the Power" by Public Enemy is a recurring aural motif in the film, as blasted from a huge ghetto blaster tooted by Radio Raheem. It appears 15 times in the film.

1989 the number another summer (get down)  
Sound of the funky drummer  
Music hittin' your heart cause I know you got soul  
(Brothers and sisters hey)  
Listen if you're missin' y'all  
Swingin' while I'm singin'  
Givin' whatcha gettin'  
Knowin' what I know  
While the Black bands sweatin'  
And the rhythm rhymes rollin'  
Got to give us what we want  
Gotta give us what we need  
Our freedom of speech is freedom or death  
We got to fight the powers that be  
Lemme hear you say  
Fight the power

Chorus

As the rhythm designed to bounce  
What counts is that the rhymes  
Designed to fill your mind  
Now that you've realized the prides arrived  
We got to pump the stuff to make us tough  
from the heart  
It's a start, a work of art  
To revolutionize make a change nothin's strange  
People, people we are the same  
No we're not the same  
Cause we don't know the game  
What we need is awareness, we can't get careless  
You say what is this?  
My beloved lets get down to business  
Mental self defensive fitness  
(Yo) bum rush the show  
You gotta go for what you know  
Make everybody see, in order to fight the powers that be  
Lemme hear you say...  
Fight the Power

## Chorus

Elvis was a hero to most  
But he never meant ---- to me you see  
Straight up racist that sucker was  
Simple and plain  
Mother---- him and John Wayne  
Cause I'm Black and I'm proud  
I'm ready and hyped plus I'm amped  
Most of my heroes don't appear on no stamps  
Sample a look back you look and find  
Nothing but rednecks for 400 years if you check  
Don't worry be happy  
Was a number one jam  
Damn if I say it you can slap me right here  
(Get it) lets get this party started right  
Right on, c'mon  
What we got to say  
Power to the people no delay  
To make everybody see  
In order to fight the powers that be

(Fight the Power)

When this movie first appeared, some people were bothered by it; they think it would cause trouble. Others felt the message was confused. Some found it too militant; others found it the work of a middle-class director who is trying to play street-smart.

Of course, it is confused. Of course, it wavers between middle-class values and street values. Of course, it is not sure whether it believes in liberal pieties or militancy. Of course, some of the characters are sympathetic and others are hateful. Of course, some of the likable characters do bad things.

The movie takes place during one long, hot day in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn. However, this is not the typical urban cityscape we have seen in countless action movies about violence and guns and drugs. People live here. It is a neighborhood like those city neighborhoods in the urban movies of the Depression: People know one another and accept one another, and although there are problems, there also is a sense of community.

The neighborhood is black, but two of the businesses aren't. Sal's Famous Pizzeria has been on the same corner since before the neighborhood changed, and Sal boasts that "these people have grown up on my pizza." And in a nearby storefront that had been boarded up for years, a Korean family has opened a fruit and vegetable stand. Nobody seems to know the Koreans, but Sal and his sons are neighborhood fixtures: They know everybody, and everybody knows them.

Sal is a tough, no-nonsense guy who basically wants to get along and tend to business. One of his sons is a vocal racist - in private, of course. The other is more open

toward blacks. Sal's ambassador to the community is a likable local youth named Mookie, who delivers pizzas and also acts as a messenger of news and gossip. Mookie is good at his job, but his heart isn't in it; he knows there's no future in delivering pizzas.

We meet other people in the neighborhood. There are Da Mayor, a kind of everyman who knows everybody; Buggin' Out, a vocal militant; Radio Raheem, whose boom box defines his life and provides a musical cocoon to insulate him from the world; Mother Sister, who is sort of the neighborhood witch. There are the local disk jockey, whose program provides a running commentary, and a retarded street person who wanders around selling photos of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. And then there are three old guys on the corner who comment on developments, slowly and at length.

Things are happening under the surface. Tensions are building. Old hurts are being remembered. Finally, the movie explodes in racial violence. In the movie's final scene, Sal's conversation with Mookie holds out little hope, but it holds out at least the possibility that something has been learned from the tragedy, and the way Aiello plays this scene is quietly brilliant.

Radio Raheem and Buggin' Out march into Sal's and stage a sit-in, protesting until Sal changes the pictures on the wall. Radio Raheem's boombox is blaring, as always, Public Enemy's "Fight the Power," at the highest volume possible in lieu of their protest. Sal demands that they turn the radio down or leave the shop, which the two men refuse to do. Reaching his wit's end, Sal snaps and destroys Radio Raheem's boombox with a baseball bat. Radio Raheem's prized possession destroyed, he becomes enraged and begins choking Sal. Vito and Pino jump onto Radio Raheem in attempt to pull the men apart, at which point the other African American men in the restaurant join the scuffle. A fight ensues between Radio Raheem and Sal on one side and Buggin' Out and Pino on the other, with Vito and Mookie trying to break it up. The fight spills out into the streets, to a crowd of spectators cheering on the fight. White policeman arrive at the scene and begin to apprehend Radio Raheem and Buggin' Out. Radio Raheem is placed in a choke hold that kills him (a reference to a 1983 incident where graffiti artist Michael Stewart was apprehended for defacing public property and killed by the arresting officer in a similar manner). An underlying issue in this series of arrests is that of six officers present in this mostly African American neighborhood, only one officer on the scene is black and the rest are white. Buggin' Out yells angrily "You're taking me to jail, huh, you're not taking Vito or Pino or Sal.", and "you can't arrest all of us!" as he is arrested. Officers continue to beat him from the front seat of the car as they drive him away from the scene.

The fight drew a large crowd of onlookers, all of whom are enraged about Radio Raheem's death. Deciding that the floodgates are going to burst open eventually, Mookie grabs a trash can and, screaming "HATE!", slings it through the window of Sal's restaurant. The angry crowd becomes an angry riotous mob, and rushes into the restaurant and destroys everything within and Smiley starts a fire. Firefighters arrive and begin spraying the building as the crowd are held back by riot patrol. The firefighters turn their hoses on the mob (much like how Blacks were hosed during Civil Rights Movements in the 1960s) which further enrages the mob. The Mob begins to head for the Korean's market but the owner stops them by yelling, "I black!" trying to explain he is one of them. The mob spares his store and begins to disperse with Sweet Dick Willie saying, "the Korean's alright."

When it is all over, Sal's pizzeria is burned beyond recognition, while Sal and his two sons were saved by Da Mayor just before the riot started. Smiley, with no one else around to see, wanders back into the smoldering restaurant and, sympathetic to Buggin' Out's cause, hangs on what's left of Sal's "Wall of Fame" one of his pictures of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. shaking hands.

The next day, Mookie, who has been at Tina's goes to Sal's, where Mookie gets his weekly pay he had earlier been demanding to receive early. He and Sal cautiously reconcile.

The film ends on an ambiguous note due to two quotations. The first, from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., argues that violence is never justified under any circumstances. The second, from Malcolm X, argues that violence is "intelligent" when it is self-defense.

Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than to convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys a community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers. - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I think there are plenty of good people in America, but there are also plenty of bad people in America and the bad ones are the ones who seem to have all the power and be in these positions to block things that you and I need. Because this is the situation, you and I have to preserve the right to do what is necessary to bring an end to that situation, and it doesn't mean that I advocate violence, but at the same time I am not against using violence in self-defense. I don't even call it violence when it's self-defense, I call it intelligence. – Malcolm X

Here are other memorable quotes from the movie. Beware of cussing in what follows, but this movie is like that.

Mookie & Buggin' Out

- Buggin' Out: Yo Mookie!
- Mookie: What?
- Buggin' Out: Stay black.
- Buggin' Out: You the man.
- Mookie: No you the man.
- Buggin' Out: You the man.
- Mookie: No you the man.

- Buggin' Out: No. I'm just a struggling black man trying to keep my dick hard in a cruel and harsh world.

#### Mookie & Pino

- Mookie: Pino, fuck you, fuck your fuckin' pizza, and fuck Frank Sinatra.  
- Pino: Yeah? Well fuck you too, and fuck Michael Jackson.

#### Mookie & Da Mayor

- Da Mayor: Doctor...  
- Mookie: C'mon, what. What?  
- Da Mayor: Always do the right thing.  
- Mookie: That's it?  
- Da Mayor: That's it.  
- Mookie: I got it, I'm gone.

#### Radio Raheem

- Radio Raheem: (50:29 to 51:47) Let me tell you the story of "Right Hand, Left Hand." It's a tale of good and evil. Hate: It was with this hand that Cane iced his brother. Love: These five fingers, they go straight to the soul of man. The right hand: the hand of love. The story of life is this: Static. One hand is always fighting the other hand; and the left hand is kicking much ass. I mean, it looks like the right hand, Love, is finished. But, hold on, stop the presses, the right hand is coming back. Yeah, he got the left hand on the ropes, now, that's right. Ooh, it's the devastating right and Hate is hurt, he's down. Left-Hand Hate K.O.ed by Love. If I love you, I love you. But if I hate you ... I love you man."

#### Tina

- Tina: Trust you? The last time I trusted you, Mookie, I ended up with a son.

#### Buggin' Out & Sal

- Buggin' Out: Yo Sal, we're gonna boycott your fat pasta ass!  
- Sal: You're gonna boycott me? You haven't got the \*balls\* to boycott me! Here, here's your boycott, up your ass you've got a boycott!

#### Sal

- Sal: Hey! The only ass-kicking that's gonna be done around here is gonna be done by me!

- Sal: The fuck is wrong with you? This ain't about money, I could give a fuck about money. You see this fucking place? I built this fucking place, with my bare fucking hands! Every light socket, every piece of tile, me, with these fucking hands!

#### Radio Raheem & Sonny

- Radio Raheem: Give me 20 D Energizers.
- Sonny: 20 C Energizers?
- Radio Raheem: Not C, D.
- Sonny: C Energizers?
- Radio Raheem: D motherfucker, D. Learn to speak English first, all right?
- Kim: How many you say?
- Radio Raheem: 20, motherfucker, 20.
- Sonny: Motherfuck you!
- Radio Raheem: Motherfuck you? You, you all right, man.

#### Pino

- Pino: I detest this place like a sickness.

#### Sal & Pino & Vito

- Sal: Pino, get a broom and sweep out front.
- Pino: Vito, get a broom and sweep out front.
- Vito: Huh?
- Pino: Get a broom and sweep out front.
- Vito: What?
- Pino: GET A BROOM AND SWEEP OUT FRONT!
- Vito: See Pop, it's just what I was telling ya, every time you tell Pino what to do, he tells me to do what you told him what to do.

#### Mother Sister & Da Mayor

- Mother Sister: Hey, you old drunk, what did I tell you about drinking in front of my stoop? Move on, you're blocking my view. You are ugly enough, don't stare at me, the Evil Eye doesn't work on me.
- Da Mayor: Mother Sister, you've been talkin' about me for 18 years. What have I ever done to you?
- Mother Sister: You a drunk fool!



- Da Mayor: Besides that? Da Mayor don't bother nobody and nobody no bother Da Mayor but you. The Man just tends to his own business, I love everybody, I even love you.

- Mother Sister: Hold your tongue, you don't have that much love!

Da Mayor: One day you're gonna be nice to me. We may both be dead and buried, but you're gonna be nice, at least civil.

### Buggin' Out & Clifton & Punchy

- Buggin' Out: You almost knocked me down man, the word is "excuse me."

- Clifton: Ah, excuse me, I'm sorry.

- Buggin' Out: Not only did ya knock me down, you stepped on my brand new white Air Jordan's I just bought, and that's all you can say is "excuse me"?

- Clifton: What, are you serious?

- Buggin' Out: Yeah, I'm serious, I'll fuck you up quick two times!

- Punchy: Two times!

- Buggin' Out: Who told you to step on my sneakers, who told you to walk on my side of the block, who told you to be in my neighborhood?

- Clifton: I own this brownstone.

- Buggin' Out: Who told you to buy a brownstone on my block, in my neighborhood, on my side of the street? Yo, what you wanna live in a black neighborhood for anyway, man, motherfuck gentrification!

### Mister Senor Love Daddy

- Mister Senor Love Daddy: Yes children, this is the cool-out corner. We're slowing it down for all the lovers in the house. I'll be giving you all the help you need, musically, that is.

- Mister Senor Love Daddy: My people, my people, what can I say, say what I can. I saw it but didn't believe it, I didn't believe what I saw. Are we gonna live together, together are we gonna live?

- Mister Senor Love Daddy: Whoa! Ya'll take a chill! You got to cool that shit off! And that's the double-truth, Ruth!

### Mother Sister & Da Mayor

- Mother Sister: Good morning.

- Da Mayor: Is it a good morning?

- Mother Sister: Yes, indeed. You almost got yourself killed last night.

- Da Mayor: I've done that before. Where did you sleep?

- Mother Sister: I didn't.

- Da Mayor: Hope the block is still standing.

- Mother Sister: We're still standing.

Sweet Dick Willie

- Sweet Dick Willie: You wanna boycott someone? You ought to start with the goddamn barber that fucked up your head.

Smiley

- Smiley: [angrily, after someone was killed by the police] One of the police was black!

Remaining

- Mookie: Dago, wop, guinea, garlic-breath, pizza-slingin', spaghetti-bendin', Vic Damone, Perry Como, Luciano Pavarotti, Sole Mio, nonsingin' motherfucker!

- Pino: You gold-teeth-gold-chain-wearin', fried-chicken-and-biscuit-eatin', monkey, ape, baboon, big thigh, fast-runnin', high-jumpin', spear-chuckin', three-hundred-and-sixty-degree-basketball-dunkin', titsoon, spade, moulinyan.

## **Steel Magnolias – 1989 Movie**

*Steel Magnolias* is a 1989 comedy concerning the lives and loves of five women friends in the South. It received a PG rating. It has a run time of 118 minutes. It made \$79.4 million in the USA. It won People's Choice Award for best film. Sally Field (Boston Globe best actress in a drama) is M'Lynn Eatenton, Dolly Parton is Truvy Jones, Shirley MacLaine (British best supporting actress nomination) is Ouiser Boudreaux, Daryl Hannah is Annelle Dupuy Desoto, Olympia Dukakis is Clairee Belcher, and Julia Roberts (academy nomination and Golden Globe win for best supporting actress) is Shelby Eatenton Latcherie.

The movie is essentially a series of comic one-liners leading up to a teary tragedy. The movie takes place in Louisiana during what is said to be the 1980s and involves a tightly knit group of women friends whose husbands (being absent, depressed or dead) leave them lots of time to gossip at the beauty parlor. Gossip is what they do best, and one of the characters even appropriates Alice Roosevelt Longworth's immortal line, "If you have something bad to say about somebody . . . sit down right here beside me!" What the women treasure most is anyone with a "past," and when the gawky new girl at the beauty parlor confesses that she "thinks" she is married, they draw closer and hold their breath. Truvy Jones operates the beauty shop. Into her hands, at the beginning of the movie, comes a young bride-to-be Shelby, who almost faints when she sees herself in the mirror. It's not shock, it's diabetes, and a glass of orange juice brings her around. Truvy has just hired a new girl Annelle, who does her best with the mother of the bride, M'Lynn. Dropping in to exchange insights are Ouser Boudreaux, as the richest and meanest woman in town, and Clairee Belcher, whose character has lost her husband but has a pot-bellied suitor on the horizon. These six women are the steel magnolias of the title, Southern belles who are dippy on the outside but strong enough inside to survive any challenge, of which in this film there are many. At first, we are not aware of

impending tragedy, however, because the movie sticks so successfully to its comic dialogue.

At one point, Truvy observes, "What separates us from the animals is our ability to accessorize." The men do not amount to much in this movie, whether the father of the bride is shooting birds out of trees, or the groom or the husband of Ouser is depressed, or the groom is almost a nonentity during the most important parts of his life. This is a woman's picture. The women in it cook, sew, mend, and drive each other around town. They fight and make up and hug each other and cry. They get their hair done. When tragedy strikes and there is a death in their little group, they have the strength to grieve and the character to smile through their tears.

The big scene in the movie is a brief, heartbreaking monologue by Sally Field, who asks God the question that is often uppermost in all of our minds: "Why?" (1:39:31 to 1:46:53) The way she asks it, and the words she uses, are tremendously effective, and, yes, we are moved. The girls comment on the beauty of the flowers. Annelle says she should feel better that Shelby is with her king. M'Linn says she is selfish and would rather have her. She then explains that Shelby is a guardian angel on our side. That is how she gets through things like this. M'Linn could not leave her side. They turned off the machines. The men left, and mom stayed. "I was there when this precious creature drifted into my life. I was there when she drifted out of my life. It was the most precious moment of my life." Then, she goes into the question we all want to ask God. "Why." She starts crying, and her friends ask if everything is all right. "I 'm fine. I could jog all the way to Texas and back, but my daughter can't. She never could. God! I'm so mad, I don't know what to do! I want know why Shelby's life is over. I wanna know how that baby will ever know how wonderful his mother was. Will he ever know what she went through for him? Lord, I wish I could understand. No, it's not supposed to happen this way. I'm supposed to go first. I've always been ready to go. I don't think I can take this. I just wanna hit somebody till they feel as bad as I do. I just wanna hit something. I wanna hit it hard!" The tears this scene often inspires is followed by a great big laugh. Clairee takes Ouser by the arm, pushes her toward M'Linn, and says, "Hit this. Go ahead, slap her. We'll sell T-shirts saying, I slapped Ouser Boudreaux! Ouser, this is your chance to do something for your fellow man. Knock her lights out M'Linn." but right on the brink of being a cheap dramatic trick, and we are reminded that "Steel Magnolias," for all its pretensions, is closer to "Miss Firecracker" than to "Terms of Endearment." Ouser suddenly leaves. Clairee yells after her, "I was only kidding!" Annelle says, "Oh, that was not a Christian thing to do." Clairee says, "Oh, lighten up."

In the end (1:49: to 1:55:) Clairee approaches Ouser, who is sitting on a park bench. Although Ouser is still upset, they start joking around. Clearly, they have renewed their friendship. As they join their other friends, Truvy says she is glad the two of them have made up. Ouser hugs M'Linn, saying, "You are in my prayers. Annelle looks at her with a surprised expression. Ouser then says, "Yes, Annelle, I pray. There, I said it." Annelle says, "I suspected as much." Ouser then says, "Don't you expect me to come to one of your churches. Those tent revivals with those Bible-beaters doing God-knows-what. They'd probably make me eat a live chicken." Annelle responds, "Not on your first visit." M'Linn starts swinging her daughter's baby from the tree swing. Remember, her daughter died at the same time as the baby gave birth. Annelle asks M'Linn if she can name her baby Shelby, since she was the reason they met. She

responds, "That's the way it should be. Life goes on." The scene shifts to an Easter party by the lake. Children play along the hill as they look for Easter eggs. The husband of Truvy, who has done almost nothing throughout the movie, has a dramatic gesture of support for business. People laugh and make jokes. And Annelle starts having contractions with her baby. Even Ouiser and Clairee help her. Life goes on.

## Big – 1988 Movie

*Big* is a 1988 movie. It received a PG rating. It runs 142 min. It made \$113.4 million in the USA. It stars Tom Hanks (nominated for best actor, won best actor for Golden Globe and LA Film Critics Association), Elizabeth Perkins, Robert Loggia, and John Heard. Penny Marshall is the director. Gary Ross and Anne Spielberg received a nomination for best original screenplay. The film received a nomination for best film in the Golden Globe and won the People's Choice Award.

An old saying is, "Be careful what you wish for -- it might come true." Such a saying is the truism around which this movie turns. Josh Baskin (David Moscow), a suburban kid who plays Little League and is just starting to discover girls, dreams of leaving childhood behind. He's at the age where all the girls in his class are about a foot taller than he is and looking for older, more mature boys. Bigger boys. Young Josh visits a fairground and after an embarrassing incident in front of a girl, spies a machine - Zoltar - that promises to make his wishes come true. Therefore, he asks to be big, and next day wakes up in his early thirties as Tom Hanks. His wish comes true. Josh hops out of bed, the thud he makes as his feet hit the ground is a lot louder than usual, and the face in the mirror (which belongs to Tom Hanks) is not one he recognizes. Forced to leave home because, quite naturally, his mother does not believe his story (she thinks he's a burglar), Josh heads for New York City with his best friend Billy (Jared Rushton), who installs him in a Times Square flophouse. He ends up pretending to be kidnapped to save explaining himself to his mother,

A lot of the comedy in these scenes is based on Josh's ignorance of the coded social language of adults. The rest of the film deals with big Josh and his little best friend, Billy. They search for the traveling carnival so he can get back to normal. Along the way, Josh gets a job in New York City at a toy company, where he quite understandably excels. He also attracts the attention of a beautiful co-worker. He soon finds his feet - thanks partly to street-smart buddy Billy and a lucky break that finds him with a job in a toy company, run by the kindly MacMillan. Of course as a young lad inside, he fits right into the industry, being appointed Vice-President and attracting the attentions of co-worker Susan (Perkins). But he's grown up just too quickly and soon - despite a loss of virginity and bucketloads of free toys - he finds himself pining for his innocence.

In one scene, (35:55 to 40:27), the boy/man, Josh, wins over the boss with his creativity and sense of play. They end up playing chopsticks on the piano with their feet.

In the end, Josh has to decide if he wants to stay an adult or go back to his childhood and live out his adolescence and young adult life. He visits the home of his best friend, Billy, and he sees a group of his friends playing in a pile of leaves they have raked. He goes to the High School, and he sees a group of youth piling into a convertible. He sees another group of youth gathering around for a group school picture. He decides that he does not want to miss out on the process of growing up.

In a simple way, and without preaching, the movie says, "Hold on to that kid." The point seems to be that the world makes a whole lot more sense through the eyes of a child. Adults needlessly complicate, they lose touch with what matters. Therefore, this child behind-enemy-lines, dressed in adult skin, takes on the guise of the simple person who knows more than he thinks he knows, and whom others think he knows more than he actually knows.

## **Decalogue – 1988 Polish Film**

*The Decalogue* is a 1988 movie. Each film is slightly under 58 minutes, with the total being 584 minutes.

The movie is a dramatic 10-episode revision of the Ten Commandments by master director Krzysztof Kieslowski.

Roger Ebert makes this set of movies part of his "Great Movies" list. What I include here is largely from his review of the movie.

Ten commandments, 10 films.

Krzysztof Kieslowski sat for months in his small, smoke-filled room in Warsaw writing the scripts with a lawyer he had met in the early 1980s, during the Solidarity trials. Krzysztof Piesiewicz did not know how to write, the director remembered, but he could talk. For hours, they talked about Poland in turmoil, and together they wrote the screenplay for "No End" (1985), which told three stories of life under martial law. The government found it unsympathetic, the opposition found it compromised, and the Catholic Church found it immoral. During the controversy, the collaborators ran into each other in the rain, and Piesiewicz, maybe looking for more trouble, shouted, "Someone should make a film about the Ten Commandments."

They made 10 films, each an hour long, for Polish television. The series ran in the late 1980s, played at Venice and other film festivals, and gathered extraordinary praise. However, the form was ungainly for theatrical showing (do you ask audiences to sit for 10 hours, or come for five two-hour sessions?), and "The Decalogue" never had an ordinary U.S. theatrical run, nor was it available here on video. Now, at last, it is being released in North America on tapes and DVD discs.

Roger Ebert says he taught a class on "The Decalogue" in the late 1990's, using tapes from England, and found that we lost a lot of time trying to match up the films and the commandments. There is not a one-to-one correlation; some films touch on more than one commandment, and others involve the ethical system suggested by the commandments. These films are not simplistic illustrations of the rules, but stories that involve real people in the complexities of real problems.

All the stories involve characters who live in the same high-rise Warsaw apartment complex. We grow familiar with the layout, and even glimpse characters from one story in the backgrounds of others--sharing the lift, for example. There is a young man who appears in eight of them, a solemn onlooker who never says anything but sometimes makes sad eye contact. Ebert says he thought the man represented Christ, but Kieslowski, in an essay about the series, says, "I don't know who he is; just a guy who comes and watches us, our lives. He's not very pleased with us." Directors are notorious for not pinning down the meanings of their images. Annette Insdorf, in her book about Kieslowski, *Double Lives, Second Chances*, compares the watcher to the angels in Wim

Wenders' "Wings of Desire," who are "pure gaze"--able to "record human folly and suffering but unable to alter the course of the lives they witness."

The 10 films are not philosophical abstractions but personal stories that involve us immediately; Ebert says he hardly stirred during some of them. After seeing the series, Stanley Kubrick observed that Kieslowski and Piesiewicz "have the very rare ability to dramatize their ideas rather than just talking about them." Quite so. There is not a moment when the characters talk about specific commandments or moral issues. Instead, they are absorbed in trying to deal with real-life ethical challenges.

Decalogue 1 (I Am the Lord Thy God) is about Pavel and his father are very close--emotionally and intellectually, as the child's mother is abroad or perhaps even dead. Pavel is taught to put his faith in science, in the infallibility of computers, which can even confirm the safety of the ice on the nearby ponds. Before he goes off to ice-skate, Pavel--saddened by a dead dog--questions, "Why do people have to die at all?" When the father later hears that three children are feared dead on the ponds, he begins a frantic search to find his son. Possibly the saddest of all his stories, he tells about the love between a smart father and a genius son. Together they use computers to calculate the freezing rate of a nearby pond, so they will know when the ice is thick enough to skate safely. However, ponds and currents cannot always be studied so simply, and perhaps the computer is a false god.

Consider the heroine of "Decalogue Two," who wants a doctor to tell her whether her sick husband will live or die. The doctor, a gruff and solitary being, is almost cruelly distant with her; he resists being asked to play God. The woman explains why she must know: She is pregnant with another man's child. Her husband is not fertile. If he is going to live, she will have an abortion. If he is going to die, she will have the baby. The stuff of soap opera. But here it becomes a moral puzzle, solved finally only through a flashback to the doctor's own painful past--and even then the solution is indirect, since events do not turn out as anyone anticipates. Kieslowski roots the issues in very specific performances by the doctor and the woman (Aleksander Bardini and Krystyna Janda), and a beautiful, subtle thing happens: The film is about their separate moral challenges, and not about the two of them locked together by one problem.

Kieslowski deliberately avoided everyday unpleasant facts in Poland because he thought they were a distraction--the rules, the laws, the shortages, and the bureaucracy. He deals with those parts of life that are universal.

None of these films is a simple demonstration of black and white moral issues.

Decalogue 3 (Honor the Sabbath Day) is about taxi-driver Janusz on Christmas Eve coaxed away from his wife and family by Ewa, a former mistress who beseeches him to help locate her missing husband. After an eventful evening, Janusz learns that Ewa has used him as part of a superstitious scheme to change her luck around.

Decalogue 4 (Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother) is about Anka, a 20-year-old theater student, enjoys a spontaneous and uninhibited relationship with her widowed father--although she finds herself less easy with her boyfriend. By accident, Anka discovers a letter written by her mother that changes everything: and that night she and her father play a dangerous game of Truth or Dare.

"Decalogue Five" is about a murderer who seems completely amoral. To understand him is not to forgive him. However, the story also focuses on his defense attorney, a young man trying his first case and passionately opposed to the death penalty.

Or look at the moral switch in "Decalogue Six," (Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery) which is about a lonely teenage boy who uses a telescope to spy on the sex life of a morally careless, lonely woman who lives across the way. He decides he loves her. They see each other because he is a clerk in the post office. He takes a morning milk route so he can see her then, too. Almost inevitably, she finds out he is a peeping tom (and also an anonymous phone caller, and a prankster), but we can hardly guess what she does then. In one of the sharp but plausible dramatic twists that Kieslowski likes in all of his films, the woman invites the teenager to her apartment and uses his sexual inexperience to humiliate him. And that is still only the halfway point in their moral duel; what happens next, to him, to her, to them, shows right and wrong shifting back and forth between them as sinner and victim exchange roles. Their relationship shows "situational ethics" becoming fluid and confusing.

Decalogue 7 (Thou Shalt Not Steal) is about Majka, who abducts her six-year-old daughter Ania, who was raised as her sister's child to silence the scandal of her teenage pregnancy. Taking Ania to the cottage of her surprised former lover Wojtek, she hopes to start over--but finds she must finally turn to her possessive mother.

"Decalogue 8" (Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness) is about an elderly, revered University of Warsaw ethics professor who meets the New York-based translator of her work who has come to audit her classes. During WWII, the translator was a Jewish child offered sanctuary by the ethics scholar and her husband, on the condition she be christened in the Catholic faith. Condition met, sanctuary was then denied as a matter of conscience, and a survivor has returned for an explanation. "It's 1943, February, winter. The heroine is a six-year-old Jewish girl hidden in the cellar of a Polish house – but she loses this hideout. Her father is in the ghetto, and friends seek a new hideout for her. There is a possibility, but her new custodians make one condition: she must have a certificate of christening. A cold evening. The girl and her custodian arrive at the flat of her agreed godparents. They are a young Catholic couple. The child is chilled, they've been traveling all after noon. They enter the flat. The man is agitated, the woman is calm. They serve hot tea. The child longs for it, but there's no time. The priest is waiting. Curfew is near. However, the woman asks them to sit down." Another student comes into the classroom. "They sit around the table; the man still paces about. Finally, the woman says what he finds so difficult to say. They must go back on their promise. After careful consideration, they cannot bring themselves to lie to Him they believe in, who orders them to be charitable, but forbids false witness. They false witness they were about to commit consciously was incompatible with their principles. Simply that. The custodian and the girl get up. 'More tea?' says the woman. The girl takes a sip, looks at her custodian, then puts the cup down later, downstairs, the child stands by the entrance. 'Curfew time,' she says, but the woman just stands there." The class starts debating the ethics of the situation. The teacher asks the class to reflect upon the point of view of each of the persons mentioned in the story. Could there have been other motivations? In the next scenes, the teacher silently agonizes. In one scene (19:55 to 22:31), the teacher and the child now a young woman meet in an empty hallway. "It's you. You are alive. I've wondered all my life. Whenever I see someone toying with a gold chain, I wonder ... Lord ... You are alive." The woman says, "I was hidden by other people, relatives of the man who brought me to you. I lived with them for about two years. They're with me in America now. Well, he is dead." The teacher says, "And you traveled so far to watch my

face when you told the story.” The woman responds, “I intended to talk to you when you were in America. I tried to write several times. I planned to come. But for your words about the child, I would never ...” The teacher says, “Yes. I understand.” The woman responds, “There is a theory that a rescuer has one character, those rescued have another character.” The teacher responds, “Yes, such characteristics may exist.” The woman says, “You have them.” “Me?” The woman says, “Your activities, even after me are well known. Thanks to you, several people of my world are still alive. It’s interesting that a student easily spotted the false note in that apparently Catholic reasoning.” They have supper together that evening. The teacher brings the woman to the place where it all happened. The woman enters the apartment complex, but the teacher loses her. As they reunite, the woman says, “People don’t like witnesses of their humiliation, even bricks and mortar. We research, analyze, describe ... but can we resolve unfairness? Why do some rescue others, why others can only be rescued do you know?” They depart to the home of the teacher. “If you have traveled so far to find an answer to a mystery, you will be disappointed. The reason I had to get rid of you then is quite an ordinary one. The effect of that evening on my life – let’s not discuss it. The man who paced about with his hand in his pocket was my husband. He died in 1952. he was an officer in the underground movement. We were told that those about to take you were working for the Gestapo, and through you, the priest and your custodian, the Gestapo would have destroyed us and our organization. That’s the whole secret. Later, it turned out that the information was false. Yet we almost executed our potential protectors on the basis of it.” The teacher says that she lived with the thought that the little girl faced an almost certain death. The teacher places her hands upon the shoulders of the woman. The woman spends the night.

"Decalogue Nine" is about a man who discovers his wife is having an affair. He hides himself to spy on them, and eavesdrops as she breaks up forever with her lover--and then discovers the husband in hiding. She did the wrong thing (adultery) and the right one (ending it); his spying was a violation of her trust--and then there is an outcome where pure chance almost leads to a death, which was avoidable if either had been more honest.

At the end, you see that the Commandments work not like science but like art. They are instructions for how to paint a worthy portrait with our lives.

Kieslowski and Piesiewicz wrote the screenplays intending that a different director would film each. However, Kieslowski was unwilling to give them up, and directed all 10, each one with a different cinematographer so that the visual styles would not become not repetitious. The settings are much the same: gray exteriors, in winter for the most part, small apartments, and offices. The faces are where the life of the films resides.

These are not characters involved in the simpleminded struggles of Hollywood plots. They are adults, for the most part outside organized religion, faced with situations in their own lives that require them to make moral choices. You should not watch the films all at once, but one at a time. Then if you are lucky and have someone to talk with, you discuss the films, and learn about yourself. If you are alone, you discuss them with yourself, as so many of Kieslowski's characters do.



## **Babette's Feast – 1987 Dutch Film**

*Babette's Feast* is a 1987 film that won the Academy Award for best foreign language film. A French chef takes refuge among a small, somber Christian sect in Denmark during political unrest in her own country. When she discovers she has won the French lottery, she uses all her money to make a feast the people will never forget.

In one scene (one hour point), Babette makes her decision to hold a feast for the people of the village, obtains the food at the river, and begins preparation. The two women who seem to lead the Christian sect do not like the idea of having a French dinner. In a dream, one of the women sees the dinner as an offer of temptation. The people determine in a little meeting that they will not eat of the feast. They thought it sinful to enjoy a feast. Finally, after the speech of the captain about the greatness of a French chef, whose food they now ate, the members of the sect started eating and drinking a feast. The captain offers his speech (1:26:45 to 1:28:43). "Mercy and truth have met each other. Righteousness and bliss shall kiss one another. Man, in his weakness and shortsightedness believes he must make choices in this life. He trembles at the risks he takes. We do know fear. But no. Our choice is of no importance. There comes a time when your eyes are opened. And we come to realize that mercy is infinite. We need only await it with confidence and receive it with gratitude. Mercy imposes no conditions. And lo. Everything we have chosen has been granted, and everything we have rejected has also been granted. For mercy and truth meet each other. Righteousness and bliss shall kiss each other." The sect had rejected so much enjoyment of this life. They had presented themselves a false choice.

At the end (1:39:31 to ), the two women who lead the sect say that she should not have spent her lottery winnings on one feast. She will be poor the rest of her life. Babette says, "An artist is never poor." She quotes Papin, "Throughout the world sounds one long cry from the heart of the artist: Give me the chance to do my very best."

## **Raising Arizona – 1987 Movie**

*Raising Arizona* is a 1987 movie. It runs 92 minutes. It received a PG-13 rating. It made \$21.1 million. The movie stars Nicolas Cage (H. I.), Holly Hunter (Ed), Trey Wilson (Nathan Arizona Sr.), John Goodman (Gale), William Forsythe (Evelle), Sam McMurray (Glen), and Frances McDormand (Dot).

The movie is a comedy in which a desperate couple kidnaps a baby.

The movie is narrated by its hero, a man who specializes in robbing convenience stores. H. I. is the guy who sticks up all-night grocery stores, and Ed is the policewoman who falls in love with him while taking his mug shots. After he gets out of prison for what he hopes is the last time, they get married and set up their little home, and then discover that they cannot have children. Meanwhile, there have been stories in the paper about a local furniture czar, Nathan Arizona, whose wife took a fertility drug and had quintts. Ed convinces H. I. that anybody with five kids is not going to miss one of them, and H. I. steals into the Arizona home to kidnap one of the infants. The movie has some fun with the bombastic Arizona, and it also contains some charming moments involving the photogenic child who has been cast as the kidnapping victim. Eventually comes the Lone Motorcyclist of the Apocalypse, a scuzzy grenade-toting bounty hunter in search of

the baby. Blowing up bunnies and butterflies on route, the uneasy rider probably embodies every parent's fear of the nuclear world they bring their child into. And certainly he is H. I.'s nightmare incarnate.

In one scene (36:05 to 36:39), they are trying to name the baby they have kidnapped, and Dot says, "Why don't ya call him Jason? I just love biblical names. If I had another little boy, I'd name him Jason, Caleb or Tab. He is angel straight from heaven."

## Pale Rider – 1985 Movie

*Pale Rider* is a 1985 Western film, directed by and starring Clint Eastwood. It runs 115 minutes. It received an R rating. The film also features Michael Moriarty, Carrie Snodgrass, Christopher Penn, Richard Dysart, Sydney Penny, Richard Kiel, Doug McGrath and John Russell.

There are similarities to Eastwood's previous *Man with No Name* character, and his 1973 western *High Plains Drifter*. The title is a reference to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, as the rider of a pale horse is Death.

This movie has plot similarities to the classic Western *Shane*, including a final scene that is very similar to the famous final scene of the earlier movie. In fact, the movie is nearly a step-by-step Shane homage. A stranger (Shane/The Preacher) arrives in a town and is hosted by a local (Joe Starrett/Hull Barret), his wife (Marian/Sarah) and their child (Bob/Megan). The stranger and the local bond when they take on an "impossible task" together (undermining a root/cracking a boulder). However, the local's land and his friends' is in peril by a greedy businessman (Fletcher/LaHood). The stranger fends off an initial advance and gains one of the businessman's henchmen (Chris/Club). The local's child falls for the stranger, but is rejected at first. The stranger is made to relive his past when the businessman calls for an assassin (Stark Wilson/Stockburn) and one of the local's friends is killed. The stranger handles the assassin on his own in a final duel where both assassin and businessman are killed. He then leaves, and the child runs after him and cries out tearfully "I love you."

*Pale Rider* is the only Eastwood film to have clear religious overtones throughout. In an audio interview, Clint Eastwood revealed that his character Preacher "is an out and out ghost". The idea that the Preacher is a supernatural being is suggested early in the film when he is shown with six bullet wounds on his back—wounds that a mortal could not survive. Furthermore, the character arrives riding a pale horse at the same moment that a teenage girl—who had earlier asked help from God—reads from the Bible in Revelation of the fourth horseman of the Apocalypse, Death riding on a pale horse. When LaHood describes Preacher to Marshall Stockburn, the Marshall says the man sounds familiar, except that the man he's thinking of is already dead. Stockburn does indeed appear to recognize the Preacher in the film's climax immediately before his death.

There are several counterpoints to the idea that the Preacher is supernatural, including: that the Preacher stores his six guns in a safe-deposit box; that he possibly has sex with Sarah on the night before the big gunfight; and that his life is shown "saved" twice, once by Hull and again by LaHood thug Club.

*Pale Rider* was primarily filmed in the Boulder Mountains and the Sawtooth National Recreation Area in Idaho, just north of Sun Valley in late 1984. The opening scenes featuring the jagged Sawtooth Mountains were shot outside of Stanley.

The plot centers on the conflict between a group of simple, poor, panning miners and the most powerful man in the nearby town, Coy LaHood, the boss of a successful hydraulic mining outfit, that wants to take over their land. The film opens with the ruffians of LaHood riding into the panner's camp, shooting things up and pulling down tents and cabins. Megan then prays the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm over her dead dog. As she does so, a new cowboy appears.

"The Lord is my shepherd;  
I shall not want."  
But I do want.  
"He leadeth me beside still waters.  
"He restoreth my soul."  
But they killed my dog.  
"Yea, though I walk through the valley  
of the shadow of death  
"I shall fear no evil"  
But I am afraid.  
"for thou art with me  
"thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."  
But we need a miracle.  
"Thy loving kindness and mercy  
"shall follow me all the days of my life."  
If you exist.  
"And I shall dwell in the house  
of the Lord forever."  
But I'd like to get more out of this life first.  
If you don't help us  
we're all going to die.  
Please?  
Just one miracle?  
Amen.

Soon after, one of the panners heads into town for supplies, and is set upon by the same ruffians. A drifter (Clint Eastwood) rides in and defends the miner with unexpected skill wielding a hickory axe handle. He rides into camp, but as he did so, Megan is again quoting from scripture.

"And power was given to him that sat  
to take peace from the earth  
"that they should kill one another:  
and he was given a great sword.  
"When he opened the third seal,  
the third beast said, 'Come and see."  
Fetch me some butter and syrup.  
"And I beheld, and lo a black horse

"he that sat on him held a pair  
of balances. And I heard a voice  
"amidst the beasts say,  
'A measure of wheat for a penny  
"and three of barley for a penny  
"and see thou hurt not the oil  
and the wine.  
"When he opened the fourth seal,  
the fourth beast said:  
"Come and see. And I looked  
"and behold a pale horse:  
and his name that sat on him  
"was Death  
"and Hell followed with him."

When Megan says "pale horse," the drifter rides in.

Upon returning to the placers camp, the drifter compounds this surprise by revealing a minister's collar when invited to dinner, thus acquiring the name Preacher. LaHood warns of the danger of what a preacher could do.

When I left, those tin pans had all but given up. Their spirit was nearly broken. And a man without spirit is whipped. But a preacher, he could give them faith. Shit! One ounce of faith, they'll be dug in deeper than ticks on a hound.

LaHood bribes Preacher, but of course, Preacher resists.

"It occurred to me it must be difficult for a man of faith to carry the message on an empty stomach, so to speak. I thought why not invite this devout and humble man to preach in town? Why not let the town be his parish? In fact why not build him a brand-new church?" Preacher responds, "I can see where a preacher'd be mighty tempted by an offer like that." "Oh, indeed." "Then he'd be thinking about getting himself a batch of new clothes." "We'd have them tailor-made," says LaHood. "Then he'd start thinking about those Sunday collections," says Preacher. "Hell, in a town as rich as LaHood, that preacher'd be a wealthy man." Preacher responds, "That's why it wouldn't work. Can't serve God and mammon both. Mammon being money."

A classic western story line develops, leading to a final showdown in town between LaHood and Preacher.

## Places in the Heart – 1984 Movie

Robert Benton's Academy Award-winning 1984 film *Places in the Heart* stars Sally Field, John Malcovich, Lindsay Crouse, Danny Glover, Ed Harris, and Amy Madigan. The film is a semi-autobiographical film during the depression in Waxahachie, TX. Fields plays a young woman, widowed within the first few minutes of the film, struggling against evil forces in everyday life of central Texas during the 1930s. Forces work to take away the only thing her husband has left her and her two small children - a small cotton farm in Texas. Lynchings, brutality, infidelity, racism, greed, duplicity all of these are woven into the lives of those who make up the tapestry of Benton's story.

The film ends with a communion service (1:44:08 to 1:48:00). The preacher reads the text from I Corinthians 13. At first, the camera shows you a few of the good folk in town. Next, it shows some of the not so good. Then it shows the banker and others who conspired to take away the farm. The camera continues to move with the cups of wine. There is the faithful black farmhand who helped bring in the crop so the widow might pay her mortgage; next to him, the blind boarder. The plate passes to the children, then to their mother. Her husband, who died early in the movie, sits next her. The black boy who killed him sits next him. They commune, and each responds: "the peace of God." All gather at table, to share the bread and cup of salvation. Suddenly this is more than Sunday morning; this is the kingdom, eternity captured in time... .

This is not a human point of view. The camera has given us a look at life, the way Jesus said God looks at it. God has done something to enable everyone to come home. The apostle Paul says it this way: "In Christ, God was reconciling us to himself, not counting our trespasses against us ... ."

## Blade Runner – 1982 Movie

*Blade Runner* is a 1982 movie. It received an R rating. It runs 117 minutes. The screenplay, written by Hampton Fancher and David Peoples, was based on the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick. The film stars Harrison Ford and features Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, Edward James Olmos, M. Emmet Walsh, and Daryl Hannah. The gross for the opening weekend was a disappointing \$6.15 million. A significant factor in the film's rather poor box office performance was that its release coincided with other science fiction film releases, including *The Thing*, *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, and, most significantly, *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, which dominated box office revenues that summer.

The film is credited with prefiguring important concerns of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, such as overpopulation, globalization, climate change and genetic engineering. It remains a leading example of the neo-noir genre. *Blade Runner* brought author Philip K. Dick to the attention of Hollywood, and several more films have since been based on his work. Ridley Scott regards *Blade Runner* as "probably" his "most complete and personal film". In 2007, the American Film Institute named it the 97th greatest American film of all time in the 10th Anniversary edition of its 100 years... 100 Movies list.

In 1993, *Blade Runner* was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically, or

aesthetically significant". In 2007, the American Film Institute listed it as the 97th greatest film of all time, making it new to the list, having been left off the 1997 version. Blade Runner is currently ranked the third best film of all time by The Screen Directory. It was one of Time's 100 All-Time best movies.

The film depicts a dystopian Los Angeles in November 2019 in which genetically manufactured beings called replicants – visually indistinguishable from adult humans – are used for dangerous and degrading work in Earth's "off-world colonies". Following a small replicant uprising, replicants become illegal on Earth; and specialist police called "blade runners" are trained to hunt down and "retire" (kill) escaped replicants on Earth. The plot focuses on a brutal and cunning group of replicants hiding in Los Angeles and a semi-retired blade runner, Rick Deckard (Ford), who reluctantly agrees to take on one more assignment.

Advances in genetic technology have allowed scientists to create sophisticated biologically-engineered humanoid beings called "replicants". Following a violent revolt that takes place "off world", replicants are declared illegal on Earth.

In Los Angeles, November 2019, Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) is called out of retirement when a fellow Blade Runner, Holden (Morgan Paull) is shot administering a Voight-Kampff test to Leon (Brion James), an escaped replicant. In the scene, (5:55 to 7:38) we find the following dialogue.

Holden: "You're in a desert walking along in the sand when all of a sud--"

Leon: Is this the test now?

Holden: Yes. You're in a desert, walking along in the sand, when all of a sudden you look down --

Leon: What one?

Holden: Doesn't make any difference what desert. It's completely hypothetical.

Leon: But how come I'd be there?

Holden: Maybe you're fed up, maybe you want to be by yourself. Who knows? You look down and you see a tortoise, Leon. It's crawling towards you ---

Leon: A tortoise? What's that?

Holden: You know what a turtle is?

Leon: Of course.

Holden: Same thing.

Leon: I've never seen a turtle. But I understand what you mean.

Holden: You reach down and you flip the tortoise over on its back, Leon.

Leon: Do you make up these questions, Mr. Holden? Or do they write them down for you?

Holden: The tortoise lays on its back, its belly baking in the hot sun, beating its legs, trying to turn itself over, but it can't. Not without your help. But you're not helping.

Leon: What do you mean I'm not helping?

Holden: I mean you are not helping. Why is that, Leon?

Holden now informs Leon that the test is one that others made for him to administer, a test designed to elicit an emotional response. He wants to continue to the test, starts

asking a question about the mother of Leon, but Leon stands up and kills Holden by blowing him away.

A reluctant Deckard is brought to his old boss Bryant (M. Emmet Walsh), who informs him that the recent escape of Nexus-6 replicants is the worst yet. He orders Deckard to eliminate the four replicants, a process referred to as "retirement". Deckard agrees to help after Bryant makes thinly-veiled threats – if Deckard is not a cop, then he falls under 'little people'.

Bryant briefs Deckard on the replicants: Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer), the leader, is a "combat model"; Leon Kowalski (Brion James) is a nuclear fuel loader; Zhora (Joanna Cassidy), an assassin built for martial arts; and Pris (Daryl Hannah) a "basic pleasure model". Bryant also explains that the Nexus-6 model has a four-year lifespan as a failsafe to prevent them from developing their own emotions and desire for independence. Deckard is then teamed up with Gaff (Edward James Olmos) and sent to the Tyrell Corporation to ensure that the Voight-Kampff test works on Nexus-6 models. While there, Deckard discovers that Tyrell's (Joe Turkel) young assistant Rachael (Sean Young) is an experimental replicant who believes she is a human; Rachael's consciousness has been enhanced with implanted memories from Tyrell's niece, an accomplishment that Tyrell seems most pleased with.

Deckard and Gaff search Leon's apartment as Roy and Leon enter the eye manufactory of Chew (James Hong); under interrogation, Chew directs them to J.F. Sebastian (William Sanderson) as their best chance of meeting Tyrell himself. Roy's master plan to meet his maker is hampered by the urgency created by his limited lifespan, he is exhibiting symptoms of his impending death, his fingers have begun to lose life. Later, Rachael visits Deckard at his apartment to prove her humanity to him, but leaves in tears after Deckard tells her that her memories are in fact implants. Meanwhile, Pris meets J.F. Sebastian and he invites her into his apartment in the Bradbury Building where he lives alone with his manufactured companions. In some versions of the film, Deckard is seen in his apartment daydreaming about a unicorn; he gets back to work and uses a computer scanner to find an image of Zhora in Leon's photos.

Deckard goes to Animoid Row to analyze a scale found in Leon's bathroom, which belonged to a snake made by Abdul Ben Hassan. After a rough interrogation, the snake dealer directs Deckard to a sleazy strip club owned by Taffey Lewis (Hy Pyke), who employs Zhora. After a struggle in Zhora's changing room a chase through the crowded streets ensues and Deckard shoots and "retires" Zhora. In the process, one wonders who is being human and who is being inhuman.

Deckard meets with Bryant shortly after and is told to add Rachael to his list of retirements after she has disappeared from the Tyrell Corporation Headquarters. Deckard spots Rachael in the crowd and follows her, but is grabbed and beaten nearly to death by Leon. However, Rachael saves Deckard's life and they head back to his apartment. She asks Deckard if he has ever taken the test himself. She cannot tell if her memories are her own or the niece of her maker. Deckard initiates intimacy with her, she resists at first, but he eventually persuades her.

Back at Sebastian's apartment, Roy arrives, kisses Pris deeply and tells her they are the only ones left. Then he and Pris employ Sebastian's help by explaining their plight in a very subtle, yet threatening manner. In a stroke of irony, Roy discovers that the human Sebastian is suffering from a genetic disorder that accelerates his own aging. Roy

sympathizes with Sebastian because of their common fate. Using Sebastian, under the pretext of enticing Tyrell with a chess move for a game Sebastian and Tyrell were engaged in, Roy gains entry to Tyrell's penthouse. Once inside, Roy demands an extension to his lifespan from his maker. Tyrell refuses to help because of limitations of mother nature that even he can't overcome. Roy then asks for his absolution for his sins, confessing that he has done "questionable things". Tyrell arrogantly dismisses this, praising Roy's advanced design and his amazing accomplishments. He tells Roy to "revel in his time". Roy kills Tyrell and Sebastian.

Deckard arrives at Sebastian's apartment and is ambushed by Pris. Deckard manages to grab his gun and retires Pris, just as Roy returns. Roy is horrified at the loss of Pris. Angrily, Roy traps Deckard in the apartment, hunting him throughout the dilapidated Bradbury Building and eventually forcing him to the roof. The symptoms of Roy's limited lifespan worsen and his right hand begins to cramp up, so he jabs a nail through it to regain control. As Deckard attempts to escape Roy, he leaps across to another building but falls short and ends up hanging from a rain-slicked beam. Roy easily vaults the same distance and is left standing above his struggling opponent. Just as Deckard finally loses his grip, Roy seizes his arm and hauls him onto the roof, saving Deckard. As Roy's life fades away, he calmly sits and delivers a final monologue about the experiences of his short life:

"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhauser gate. All those moments, will be lost in time, like tears, in rain... Time to die."

Roy then dies peacefully – his four-year lifespan is up.

Deckard is left reflecting when Gaff, who arrives after the duel, calls from a distance, "It's too bad she won't live; but then again, who does?" A worried Deckard returns to his apartment and is relieved to find Rachael alive. As they leave, Deckard finds an origami unicorn, a calling card left by Gaff. Depending on the version, the film ends with Deckard and Rachael either leaving the apartment block or driving through an idyllic pastoral landscape.

## **Gandhi – 1982 Movie**

Gandhi is a 1982 movie. Its run time is 183 minutes. It stars Ben Kingsley (best actor), Candice Bergen, Edward Fox, John Gielgud, and Trevor Howard. The directors are Richard Attenborough (best director) and Govind Nihalani. The movie won best picture, best art direction, best costume design, best editing, and best original screenplay (John Briley). It received a nominations for best sound, best original score, best makeup, and best cinematography. Ben Kingsley, the film, and the director, all won at the British Academy Awards and the Golden Globe Awards. Ben Kingsley and the film also won L. A. Film Critics Association, National Board of Review, and New York Film Critics Circle.

In the middle of this epic film, 1:59:46 to 2:01:29, there is a quiet, small scene that helps explain why GANDHI is such a remarkable experience. Mahatma Gandhi, at the height of his power and his fame, stands by the side of a lake with his wife of many



years. Together, for the benefit of a visitor from the West, they reenact their marriage vows. They do it with solemnity, quiet warmth, and perhaps just a touch of shyness; they are simultaneously demonstrating an aspect of Indian culture and touching on something very personal to them both. At the end of the ceremony, Gandhi says, "We were thirteen at the time." He shrugs. The marriage had been arranged. Gandhi and his wife had not been in love, had not been old enough for love, and yet love had grown between them. But that is not really the point of the scene. The point, I think, comes in the quiet smile with which Gandhi says the words. At that moment we believe that he is fully and truly human, and at that moment, a turning point in the film, Gandhi declares that it is not only a historical record but a breathing, living document.

Roger Ebert notes that this is the sort of rare epic film that spans the decades, that uses the proverbial cast of thousands, and yet follows a human thread from beginning to end: GANDHI is no more overwhelmed by the scope of its production than was Gandhi overwhelmed by all the glory of the British Empire. The movie earns comparison with two classic works by David Lean, LAWRENCE OF ARABIA and DOCTOR ZHIVAGO, in its ability to paint a strong human story on a very large canvas.

The movie begins in the early years of the century, in South Africa. Gandhi moved there from India in 1893, when he was twenty-three. He already had a law degree, but, degree or not, he was a target of South Africa's system of racial segregation, in which Indians (even though they are Caucasian, and thus should "qualify") are denied full citizenship and manhood. Gandhi's reaction to the system is, at first, almost naive; an early scene on a train does not quite work only because we cannot believe the adult Gandhi would still be so ill-informed about the racial code of South Africa. But Gandhi's response sets the tone of the film. He is nonviolent but firm. He is sure where the right lies in every situation, and he will uphold it in total disregard for the possible consequences to himself.

Before long Gandhi is in India, a nation of hundreds of millions, ruled by a relative handful of British. They rule almost by divine right, shouldering the "white man's burden" even though they have not quite been requested to do so by the Indians. Gandhi realizes that Indians have been made into second-class citizens in their own country, and he begins a program of civil disobedience that is at first ignored by the British, then scorned, and finally, reluctantly, dealt with, sometimes by subterfuge, sometimes by brutality. Scenes in this central passage of the movie make it clear that nonviolent protests could contain a great deal of violence. There is a shattering scene in which wave after wave of Gandhi's followers march forward to be beaten to the ground by British clubs. Through it all, Gandhi maintains a certain detachment; he is convinced he is right, convinced that violence is not an answer, convinced that sheer moral example can free his nation, as it did. "You have been guests in our home long enough," he tells the British, "Now we would like for you to leave."

In one scene, 51:00 to 53:24, Gandhi and the Church of England minister travel on the train together. The top of the train has the common people traveling. A man on the top of the train invites the minister to put his foot on the window ledge and come to the top of the train with them. "You see, it is most comfortable." "Are you a Christian?" "Yes." "I know a Christian. She drinks blood. The blood of Christ.

In one scene, 1:05:38 to 1:06:58, after one of the common people expresses the difficulty they face of losing their land to the British landlords, Gandhi says, "What we can do, we will do."

In one scene, 2:54:08 to 2:56:44, common folk come to Gandhi to let him know that he can end his hunger strike. The Hindu sword is laid down. Another man says he is going to hell, but not with his death on his hands. He says he killed a child, a Muslim child. Why? Because the Muslims killed his child. "I know a way out of hell." He is to find a child whose Muslim parents have died, and raise the child as his own, but raise him as a Muslim.

In one scene, 2:59:53 to 3:02:26, an American journalist asks if he is going to Pakistan. When he says, she says, "You are a stubborn man." "I am simply going to prove to Hindus here and Muslims there that the only devils in the world are those running around in our own hearts. And that is where all our battles ought to be fought." She asks, "So what kind of warrior have you been in that battle." He responds, "Oh, not a very good one. That's why I have so much tolerance for the scoundrels of the world." The journalist remarks to an American woman who had become a follower, "There is a sadness about him." "He thinks he's failed." "Why? If anything's proved him right, it's these last months." "I may be blinded by my love for him, but I believe when we most needed it, he offered the world a way out of madness. But he doesn't see it. Neither does the world." The scene ends with someone killing him.

In the burial scene, 3:03:00 to 3:03:36, Gandhi says, "When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it. Always."

I imagine that for many Americans, Mahatma Gandhi remains a dimly understood historical figure. I suspect a lot of us know he was a great Indian leader without quite knowing why and such is our ignorance of Eastern history and culture we may not fully realize that his movement did indeed liberate India, in one of the greatest political and economic victories of all time, achieved through nonviolent principles. It reminds us that we are, after all, human, and thus capable of the most extraordinary and wonderful achievements, simply through the use of our imagination, our will, and our sense of right.

## Life of Brian – 1979 Movie

The Monty Python movie, *Life of Brian*, has an opening scene in which Jesus starts teaching the Beatitudes. Slowly, the camera pans the crowd until it reaches the back, where Brian and his mother stand. They cannot hear very well back there. One thinks he hears Jesus say, "Blessed are the cheese-makers." "What is so special about them," another says. "It is not meant to be taken literally, but rather metaphorically, about makers of all dairy products." Another thinks he hears Jesus say, "Blessed are the Greek." Another says, "What is so special about them?" Finally, another corrects him, "He said, 'Blessed are the meek.'" Another comments, "Oh good, it is about time they get something. They have such a hard time of it." Some powerful people walk away from the sermon. "Just about everyone is blessed, except those who like the status quo. What Jesus fails to realize is that the meek are the problem." All the while, Brian is trying to hear

what Jesus says. All the while, people argue about large noses, eventually getting into physical fights.

## Death Wish – 1974 Movie

*Death Wish* is a 1974 movie. The movie runs 92 min. It received an R rating. Charles Bronson (Paul Kersey), Hope Lange (Joanna Kersey), Vincent Gardenia (Frank Ochoa), Steve Keats (Jack Toby), William Redfield (Sam Kreutzer), Stuart Margolin (Ames), and Jack Wallace (Policeman). Michael Winner directed the movie and Dino De Laurentiis produced it. Wendell Mayes wrote the screenplay.

Paul Kersey is a man who appoints himself vigilante against all criminals after the murder of his wife and the rape of his daughter. His immediate reaction is one of simple grief. Then something happens which suggests a different kind of response. His office sends him to Arizona on a job, and he meets a land developer who is a gun nut. The man takes Bronson to his gun club, watches him squeeze off a few perfect practice rounds, and slips a present into his suitcase when he heads back to New York. It is a .32-caliber revolver. Alone in his apartment, Kersey examines snapshots from his recent Hawaiian vacation with his wife. Then he examines the gun. He goes out into the night, is attacked by a mugger and shoots him dead. Then he goes home and throws up. However, the taste for vengeance, once acquired, has a fascination of its own. The last half of "Death Wish" is essentially a series of cat-and-mouse games, in which Kersey poses as a middle-aged citizen with a bag of groceries and then murders his attackers. They are, by the way, everywhere. New York is in the grip of a reign of terror. Literally, every shadow holds a mugger; every subway train harbors a killer; the park is a breeding ground for crime.

The film, despite its use of graphic violence as entertainment, was hailed as a socially complex and engaging movie that shocked audiences across the country. The movie is a classic American film whose themes and style filmmakers have imitated all over the world.

In one scene (32:00 to 35:04), the gun fan gives Kersey a gun, empowering his rampage, one which the disgusted public actually supports. "So goddamn much hoopla from the gun control people. Half the nation's scared to even hold a gun! You know, like a snake as if it was going to bit you or something. Hell, a gun is just a tool. Like a hammer or an ax. Wasn't long ago, used to put food on the table, keep foxes out of the chicken coop, rustles off the range, bandits out of the bank. Paul, how long since you held a pistol in your hand?" "A long time." He reveals he was Korean War as a conscientious objector. "What a guest to bring to a gun club! You are probably one of the knee-jerk liberals who thinks us gun boys shoot our guns because its an extension of our penises." "I never thought about it that way, but it could be true." "Well, maybe it is, but this is gun country. Can't even own a handgun in New York City. Out here, I hardly know a man that doesn't own one, and I'll tell you something. Unlike your city, we can walk our streets and through our parks at night and feel safe. Muggers operating out here, they just plain get their asses blown off." Kersey takes the pistol the gun fan offers him, he fires it at the target and he hits it dead center. He then reveals that his father was a hunter, and his mother was the other side of the matter. Someone who mistook him for a deer killed his father. His mother won the day in his mind. Yet, he loved his father. He continues to fire at the target.

Critical reception to *Death Wish* was mixed, but it had an unexpectedly large impact on U.S. audiences and began widespread debate over how to deal with rampant crime. The film's graphic violence particularly the brutal rape scene of Bronson's daughter as well as the explicit portrayal of Kersey's premeditated and often in the back slayings was considered exploitive but realistic in the backdrop of an urban U.S. atmosphere of rising crime rates. This film was one of the highest-grossing titles during the early 1970s.

Many critics were displeased with the film, considering it an immoral threat to society and an encouragement of antisocial behavior. Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* was one of the most outspoken writers, condemning *Death Wish* in two extensive articles. Brian Garfield was also unhappy with the final product, calling the film 'incendiary', and even stated that each of the following sequels are all pointless and rancid, since they all advocate vigilantism unlike his two novels of which are the exact opposite.

## **Paper Moon – 1973 Movie**

*Paper Moon* is a 1973 movie. It stars Ryan O'Neal, Tatum O'Neal, Madeline Kahn, John Hiller man, and P. J. Johnson. Paramount presents a Directors Company film directed and produced by Peter Bogdanovich from a screenplay by Alvin Sargent. The basis of the movie is the novel "Addie Pray," by Joe David Brown. It received a PG rating. It runs 102 minutes.

The title of the novel, *Addie Pray*, also posed an issue. Peter Bogdanovich found the title unfitting for a film, and began exploring other possible options. While selecting music for the film, he ran across a song called *It's Only a Paper Moon* (by Billy Rose, Yip Harburg, and Harold Arlen), and found himself enthralled with the words.

Artist: Harold Arlen  
Album: *Over The Rainbow*  
Title: *It's Only A Paper Moon*

Music by harold arlen.  
Lyrics by e.y. (yip) harburg

I never feel a thing is real  
When i'm away from you  
Out of your embrace  
The world's a temporary parking place

Mmm, mm, mm, mm  
A bubble for a minute  
Mmm, mm, mm, mm  
You smile, the bubble has a rainbow in it

Say, its only a paper moon

Sailing over a cardboard sea  
But it wouldn't be make-believe  
If you believed in me

Yes, it's only a canvas sky  
Hanging over a muslin tree  
But it wouldn't be make-believe  
If you believed in me

Without your love  
It's a honky-tonk parade  
Without your love  
It's a melody played in a penny arcade

It's a barnum and bailey world  
Just as phony as it can be  
But it wouldn't be make-believe  
If you believed in me

Seeking advice from his close friend and mentor Orson Welles, Bogdanovich listed Paper Moon as a possible alternative. Welles' response has become legendary — "That title is so good, you shouldn't even make the picture, you should just release the title!"

Tatum went on to win the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress, the youngest winner in the history of the Academy Awards. Co-star Madeline Kahn was nominated in the same category that year, as was teenaged actress Linda Blair for *The Exorcist*. Coincidentally, and perhaps most tellingly, O'Neal's role is the most substantial film role ever nominated in a supporting category. Many believe that though she appears on screen nearly all of the film's running time, because she was only ten years of age at the time of her nomination, academy voters would not nominate a child in a leading category. Her performance may have also single-handedly ended the debate as to whether or not children should be nominated for competitive Academy Awards, the academy having discontinued the Academy Juvenile Award in 1960. Since O'Neal's win and Blair's nomination, other child actors, such as Jodie Foster, Haley Joel Osment and Abigail Breslin have gone on to earn nominations, with some, like Anna Paquin, even winning the award.

Roger Ebert notes that the two kinds of Depression-era movies we remember best are the ones that ignored the Depression altogether and the ones like "The Grapes of Wrath" that took it as a subject. Peter Bogdanovich's "Paper Moon" somehow manages to make these two approaches into one, so that a genre movie about a con man and a little girl is teamed up with the real poverty and desperation of Kansas and Missouri, circa 1936. One would not think the two approaches would fit together, somehow, but, they do, and the movie comes off as more honest and affecting than if Bogdanovich had simply paid tribute to older styles. Maybe that is why Addie Loggins, the little girl, hardly ever smiles: She can see perfectly well, there is nothing to smile about.

The movie opens at her mother's funeral on a windswept plain. Her mother (we learn from an old photograph) was a flapper of the worst sort, but Addie is a tomboy in

overalls and a flannel shirt. At the last moment, an old car comes rattling up and discharges one Moses Pray, con man, alleged Bible salesman and just possibly Addie's father. He promises to deliver the child to relatives in St. Joe, mostly so he can collect \$200 in blackmail money.

The opening scene (to 5:05) involves Addie at the graveside of her mother. They sing "Rock of Ages." The minister reads from a psalm. Moses Pray arrives. A woman asked if he was related to Addie's mother. They had not yet found any kin for the little girl. She thought she saw a resemblance. He (Ryan O'Neil) says he was just a friend of the family. The woman says that if ever a child needed a friend, it was now. As the funeral disburses, he places flowers in the grave and says he just wanted to see if her ass was still warm. The people at the funeral wonder if he would take Addie to the nearest relative in Missouri. At first, he resists, but he eventually gives in.

But then the 9 year-old girl, who somehow resembles Huckleberry Finn more than any little boy I can imagine, turns out to be the more clever con man, and before long they're selling Bibles to widows who are told their husbands ordered them - deluxe editions with the names embossed in gold, of course - before "passing on." The movie is about two con artists, but not really about their con, and that is a relief. Bogdanovich takes the con games only as the experience which his two lead characters share and which draws them together in a way that's funny sometimes, but also very poignant and finally deeply touching.

Tatum O'Neill has a scene in a Kansas hotel that is not at all easy. Moses has picked up a tart from a sideshow, one Trixie Delight by name, and has designs on her. Addie is jealous and makes a liaison with Trixie's young black maid, Imogene. Together they concoct a scheme to lure the hotel clerk into Trixie's room and then inform Moses. Now this could have been a hotel-corridor farce scene. However, the scene is played for pathos and for the understanding of the child's earnestness, and the two young girls are perfectly matched to it.

Addie Loggins: [about the Harem Slave show at carnival] How many times you gonna see it?

Moses Pray: As many times as I like, that's how many times!

Addie Loggins: You've seen it half a dozen already.

Moses Pray: And I might see it half a dozen more! Now why don't you go play bingo or somethin'?

Addie Loggins: I don't wanna play bingo!

Moses Pray: Then why don't you go write another love note to Saint Roosevelt?

Addie Loggins: Maybe I will!

Moses Pray: And stop standing around here checking on me! You don't have to worry. I ain't about to leave some poor little child stranded in the middle of nowhere. I've got scruples too, ya know. You know what that is... scruples?

Addie Loggins: No, I don't know what it is but if you've got 'em, it's a sure bet they belong to somebody else!

[Addie stalks off]

Addie Loggins: I want my two hundred dollars.

Moses Pray: I don't have your two hundred dollars no more and you know it.

Addie Loggins: If you don't give me my two hundred dollars I'm gonna tell a policeman how you got it and he'll make you give it to me because it's mine.

Moses Pray: But I don't have it!

Addie Loggins: Then get it!

Cafe Waitress: [walks over after Moses slams his fist on the table] How we doin', Angel Pie? We gonna have a little dessert when we finish up our hot dog?

Addie Loggins: I don't know.

Cafe Waitress: What do you say, Daddy? Why don't we give Precious a little dessert if she eats her dog?

Moses Pray: Her name ain't Precious.

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Moses Pray: [calling up to Addie on the hill] Let's go!

Trixie Delight: Hurry up, Doctor. This baby gots to go winky tinky!

Moses Pray: [patting Trixie's shoulder] Don't worry.

[calling up to Addie again]

Moses Pray: Hey!

[Moses starts walking up the hill]

Moses Pray: Come on, we're ready! Come on, now!

Addie Loggins: I ain't comin'!

Moses Pray: You listen here, child...

Addie Loggins: No, I won't listen here.

Moses Pray: What the heck's up with you then?

Addie Loggins: I wanna sit in front! And how come we ain't workin' no more?

Moses Pray: 'Cause we're on vacation, that's why, and Miss Delight and me are sittin' in front because we are two grown-ups and that's where grown-ups do the sittin'! And little children do not tell grown-ups what to do with their lives, you understand that?

Addie Loggins: Well, she ain't my grown-up and I ain't plannin' no more to sit in the back. Not for no cow!

Moses Pray: Will you keep your voice down? And Miss Delight ain't no cow. She's a proper woman. She has a high school diploma. And right now she's got to go to the bathroom, so you get on down to the car!

Addie Loggins: She always has to go to the bathroom! She must have a bladder the size of a peanut! Well, I ain't gettin' back in that car... not until she gets out of it!

[disgusted, Moses goes back to the car and talks to Trixie]

Trixie Delight: [making her way up the hill] Hey, what's up, kiddo? Daddy says you're wearin' a sad face. Ain't good to have a sad face. Hey! Hey! How'd you like a coloring book? Would you like that? You like Mickey the Mouse?

[Trixie trips and falls]

Trixie Delight: Oh, son of a bitch!

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Addie Loggins: [about the Harem Slave show at carnival] How many times you gonna see it?

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Addie Loggins: No, I don't know what it is but if you've got 'em, it's a sure bet they belong to somebody else!

[Addie stalks off]

Moses Pray: [calling after Addie about President Roosevelt] And his name ain't Frank, it's Franklin!

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Trixie Delight: I just don't understand it, Daddy, but this little baby has got to go winky tinky all the time.

Moses Pray: Well, don't you worry none. We'll just plan on stoppin' here for dinner.

Addie Loggins: [furious] But we just stopped for her to winky tink at lunch!

Moses Pray: That's right and now we're stoppin' for dinner. Come on!

Addie Loggins: I ain't hungry!

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Moses Pray: I got scruples too, you know. You know what that is? Scruples?

Addie Loggins: No, I don't know what it is, but if you got 'em, it's a sure bet they belong to somebody else!

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Addie Loggins: I need to go to the shithouse.

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Addie Loggins: [about Trixie Delight] She always has to go to the bathroom. She must have a bladder the size of a peanut.

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Moses Pray: I want one child's price ticket.

Station Master: That will be \$11.45.

Moses Pray: I want you to send this here telegram to Miss Billie Roy Griggs of Cosmo Road, St. Joseph: "Train arriving 9:52 AM and bringing love, affection, and \$20 cash." Oh, make that "\$25 cash", and sign it just "Addie Loggins".

Station Master: 10 words, that will be eighty-five cents more, that will be \$12 and 30.

Moses Pray: \$12 and 30, huh? You better say in that message there "Love, affection, and \$20 cash."

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[about Trixie Delight]



Addie Loggins: How come she had to leave that job back there?

Imogene: Cause the boss-man tried to make her put out for his friends, and she don't believe in puttin' out for free!

Addie Loggins: She put out much?

Imogene: Just like a gum machine. You drop some in and she'll put some out.

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Addie Loggins: Imogene, what do you suppose Miss Trixie'd do if somebody offered her \$25 to put out.

Imogene: Ooo Wee! You crazy? For that much money, that woman'd drop her pants down in the middle of the road!

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Imogene: [of Miss Trixie] I tried to push her out of a window in Little Rock once.

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Moses Pray: I know a woman who looks like a bullfrog but that don't mean she's the damn thing's mother.

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Moses Pray: I told you, I don't want you ridin' with me no more.

Addie Loggins: You still owe me two hundred dollars.

## **Ikiru – 1952 Movie**

*Ikiru* (生きる, Ikiru?) is a 1952 Japanese film written and directed by the acclaimed Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa. The title *Ikiru* translates as "to live" in English. The film examines the struggles of a Tokyo bureaucrat and his final quest for meaning.

Watanabe is a middle-aged man who has worked in the same monotonous bureaucratic position for decades. Mr. Watanabe has become the chief of his section, and sits with a pile of papers on either side of his desk, in front of shelves filled with countless more documents. Down a long table on either side of him, his assistants shuffle these papers back and forth. Nothing is ever decided. His job is to deal with citizen complaints, but his real job is to take a small rubber stamp and press it against each one of the documents, to show that he has handled it. Furthermore, his relationship with his son has become strained, as his son and daughter-in-law seem to care mainly about his pension and their future inheritance.

The opening shot of the film is an X-ray of Watanabe's chest. "He has gastric cancer, but doesn't yet know it," says a narrator. "He just drifts through life. In fact, he's barely alive." The X-ray fades into his face--into the sad, tired, utterly common face of the actor Takashi Shimura. There is a frightening scene in his doctor's office, where another patient chatters mindlessly; he is a messenger of doom, describing Watanabe's precise symptoms and attributing them to stomach cancer. "If they say you can eat anything you want," he says, "that means you have less than a year." When the doctor

uses the very words that were predicted, the old bureaucrat turns away from the room, so that only the camera can see him, and he looks utterly forlorn.

In a memorable scene, Watanabe goes home and cries himself to sleep under his blanket, while the camera pans up to a commendation he was awarded after 25 years at his post.

After realizing he has stomach cancer, giving him less than a year to live, Watanabe attempts to come to terms with his impending death. He plans to tell his son about the cancer, but decides against it when his son does not pay attention to him. He then tries to find escape in the pleasures of Tokyo's nightlife, but after one night, he realizes this is not the answer. Worth noticing in the night club scene is Watanabe's theme song, Gondola no Uta, which he sings to the horror of those watching him. The song is a ballad encouraging young women to find love. In the bar, he tells a stranger he has money to spend on a "really good time," but doesn't know how to spend it. The stranger takes him out on the town. He tells one female bartender that if you got news you had stomach cancer, you would start dying, but he started living. They went to gambling parlors, dance halls and the red light district, and finally to a bar where the piano player calls for requests and the old man, still wearing his overcoat and hat, asks for "Life Is Short--Fall in Love, Dear Maiden." "Oh, yeah, one of those old '20s songs," the piano man says, but he plays it, and then the old man starts to sing. His voice is soft and he scarcely moves his lips, but the bar falls silent, the party girls and the drunken salary men drawn for a moment into a reverie about the shortness of their own lives.

Life is brief  
Fall in love, maidens  
Before the crimson bloom  
Fades from your lips  
Before the tides of passion  
Cool within you  
For those of you  
Who know no tomorrow  
Life is brief  
Fall in love, maidens  
Before your raven tresses  
Begin to fade  
Before the flames in your hearts  
Flicker and die  
For those to whom  
Today will never return

The next day, a chance encounter with one of his colleagues leads him to pursue a different solution.

It is not so bad that he must die. What is worse is that he has never lived. "I just can't die -- I don't know what I've been living for all these years," he says to the stranger in the bar. He never drinks, but now he is drinking: "This expensive saki is a protest against my life up to now." His leave of absence at the office continues, day after day. Finally a young woman who wants to resign tracks him down to get his stamp on her papers. He asks her to spend the day with him, and they go to pachinko parlors and the movies. She tells him her nicknames for everyone in the office. His nickname is "the

Mummy." She is afraid she has offended him, but no: "I became a mummy for the sake of my son, but he doesn't appreciate me." She says parents are all the same, suffering for their children when, in most cases, their children do not ask them to do so. She figures out that he still adores his son. She encourages him to go see his son. However, when he tries to tell him about his illness, the son cuts him off -- insists on getting the property due him before the old man squanders it on women.

Later, on a final outing with the young woman (1:25:00 to 1:29:52), he talks about an experience he had as a child, when he almost drown. He now has a dream, "My son's far away somewhere -- just as my parents were far away when I was drowning." Watanabe is attracted to her joyous love of life and enthusiasm. He opens up to her by saying he just wants to live one day in such a carefree, youthful way like she does. She reveals that her happiness comes from her new job, making toys, which makes her feel like she is friends with all the children of Japan. He thinks that with where he works, it is too late to make anything. However, after thinking about it some more, he realizes that it is not too late. The word "Ikiru" has been translated as "To Live," and at some point on his long descent into despair, Mr. Watanabe determines to accomplish at least one worthwhile thing before he dies. He arrives at this decision in a restaurant, talking to the young woman while in a room behind them there is a celebration going on. As he leaves, girls in the other room sing "Happy Birthday" to a friend -- but in a way they sing for Watanabe's rebirth.

Inspired by her example, Watanabe dedicates his remaining time to accomplishing one worthwhile achievement before his life ends; by dint of his persistent will, he is able to overcome the inertia of bureaucracy and turn a mosquito-infested cesspool into a children's playground. A group of women have been shuttled from one office to another, protesting against a pool of stagnant water in their neighborhood. Watanabe becomes a madman, personally escorting the case from one bureaucrat to another, determined to see that a children's park is built on the wasteland before he dies. It all leads up to Watanabe's final triumph, seen in what Ebert calls one of the greatest closing shots in the cinema.

The last third of the film takes place during Watanabe's wake, as his former co-workers try to figure out what caused such a dramatic change in his behavior. His transformation from listless bureaucrat to passionate advocate puzzled them. Watanabe's family and associates gather to remember him, drinking too much and finally talking too much, trying to unravel the mystery of his death and the behavior that led up to it. And here we see the real heart of the movie, in the way one man's effort to do the right thing can inspire, or confuse, or anger, or frustrate, those who see it only from the outside, through the lens of their own unexamined lives. As the co-workers drink, they slowly realize that Watanabe must have known he was dying. They drunkenly vow to live their lives with the same dedication and passion as he did. They soon find themselves back at work, however, buried under the same meaningless busy-work they had vowed to fight.

An iconic scene from the movie is from the last few moments in Watanabe's life, as he sits on the swing at the park he built. As the snow falls, we see Watanabe gazing lovingly over the playground, at peace with himself and the world. He sings a song about falling in love while still young, for life is short.

Life is brief  
Fall in love dear maidens

Before the crimson bloom  
Fades from your lips  
Before the tides of passion  
Cool within you  
For those of you  
Who know no tomorrow

We who have followed Watanabe on his last journey are now brought forcibly back to the land of the living, to cynicism and gossip. Mentally, we urge the survivors to think differently, to arrive at our conclusions. And that is how Kurosawa achieves his final effect: He makes us not witnesses to Watanabe's decision, but evangelists for it. Ebert think this is one of the few movies that might actually be able to inspire someone to lead their life a little differently. Yet, the movie ends with the men with whom he worked, having vowed at his funeral to change their lives, in their actual work, remain unchanged.

## 12 Angry Men – 1957 Movie

*12 Angry Men* is an American drama film produced in 1957 by first time director Sidney Lumet based on the play of the same name by Reginald Rose. It runs 95 minutes. The film was nominated for Academy Awards in the categories of Best Director, Best Picture and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium. In all of these categories, the film was eclipsed by *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, which won seven Academy Awards that year. At the Berlin International Film Festival, the film won the Golden Bear Award. The filming was completed after a short but rigorous rehearsal schedule in less than three weeks on a budget of about \$350,000.

It is about a jury member who tries to persuade the other 11 members to acquit the suspect on trial on the basis of reasonable doubt. The film is notable for its use of almost just one single set: with the exception of three minutes of screen-time split between the beginning and the end and two short scenes in an adjoining washroom, the entire movie takes place in the jury room.

The titular twelve "angry men" (the jurors) are played by an ensemble cast: Henry Fonda, Lee J. Cobb, Ed Begley, John Fiedler, E.G. Marshall, Jack Warden, Ed Binns, Martin Balsam, Jack Klugman, George Voskovec, Robert Webber, and Joseph Sweeney (in his last appearance in motion pictures).

In 2007, *12 Angry Men* was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant."

Lumet in *Making Movies*, one of the most intelligent, discusses the visual strategy of the movie and informative books ever written about the cinema. In planning the movie, he says, a "lens plot" occurred to him: To make the room seem smaller as the story continued, he gradually changed to lenses of longer focal lengths, so that the backgrounds seemed to close in on the characters. "In addition," he writes, "I shot the first third of the movie above eye level, shot the second third at eye level and the last third from below eye level. In that way, toward the end the ceiling began to appear. Not only were the walls closing in, the ceiling was as well. The sense of increasing claustrophobia did a lot to raise the tension of the last part of the movie." In the film's last

shot, he observes, he used a wide-angle lens "to let us finally breathe." The movie plays like a textbook for directors interested in how lens choices affect mood. By gradually lowering his camera, Lumet illustrates another principle of composition: A higher camera tends to dominate, a lower camera tends to be dominated. As the film begins we look down on the characters, and the angle suggests they can be comprehended and mastered. By the end, they loom over us, and we feel overwhelmed by the force of their passion. Lumet uses closeups rarely, but effectively: One man in particular--Juror No. 9 (Joseph Sweeney, the oldest man on the jury)--is often seen in full-frame, because he has a way of cutting to the crucial point and stating the obvious after it has eluded the others.

On its first release, *12 Angry Men* received critical acclaim. A. H. Weiler of *The New York Times* wrote "It makes for taut, absorbing, and compelling drama that reaches far beyond the close confines of its jury room setting." His observation of the 12 men was that "their dramas are powerful and provocative enough to keep a viewer spellbound." However, it was not a popular success: the advent of color and widescreen productions resulted in the film receiving a disappointing box office performance.

Even though when first released, it proved to be a major box office disappointment, today, the film is viewed as a "classic" and is highly regarded from both a critical and popular viewpoint: Roger Ebert lists it as one of his "Great Movies,". The American Film Institute named Juror #8, played by Henry Fonda, as the 28th in a list of the 100 greatest movie heroes of the 20th century, named *12 Angry Men* the 42nd most inspiring film, and later named the movie as the 87th best film of the past hundred years. As of December 19, 2007, *12 Angry Men* is ranked as the 13th Best Film in existence on the IMDb Top 250.

The story begins after closing arguments have been presented in a murder case, as the judge is giving his instructions to the jury. In purpose, it's a crash course in those passages of the Constitution that promise defendants a fair trial and the presumption of innocence. It has a kind of stark simplicity: Apart from a brief setup and a briefer epilogue, the entire film takes place within a small New York City jury room, on "the hottest day of the year," as 12 men debate the fate of a young defendant charged with murdering his father. According to American law at the time, any jury that will decide whether the death penalty is appropriate must be unanimous. The question they are deciding is whether the defendant, an 18-year-old man, murdered his father. The jury is further instructed that a guilty verdict will be accompanied by a mandatory death sentence - the electric chair (something that could not happen in the current American legal system). The jury of twelve move to the jury room, where they begin to become acquainted with each others' personalities and discuss the case.

The film shows us nothing of the trial itself except for the judge's perfunctory, almost bored, charge to the jury. His tone of voice indicates the verdict is a foregone conclusion. We hear neither prosecutor nor defense attorney, and learn of the evidence only second-hand, as the jurors debate it. Most courtroom movies feel it necessary to end with a clear-cut verdict. But "12 Angry Men" never states whether the defendant is innocent or guilty. It is about whether the jury has a reasonable doubt about his guilt.

The plot of the film revolves around their difficulty in reaching a unanimous verdict due, in some cases, to the jurors' prejudices. Juror #8 dissents in the initial voting, stating that the evidence presented is circumstantial and the boy deserves a fair deliberation, upon which he starts questioning the accuracy and reliability of the sole two

witnesses to the murder, the fact that the knife used in the murder is not as unique as assumed (he produces an identical one from his pocket) and that the overall circumstances are rather shady.

His most fierce opponents - Jurors 3, 4 and 10 - claim that the boy's alibi is blotched, since he does not remember any detail from the movies he watched at the theatre the night of the murder and he has sufficient motivation to kill his father. His lack of memory, however, is excused by panic attack; also, one of the witnesses is accused of wanting attention whilst the other *might* have "witnessed" the murder without her glasses on. "It's an open and shut case," snaps Juror No. 3 (Lee J. Cobb) as the jury first gathers in their claustrophobic little room. When the first ballot is taken, 10 of his fellow jurors agree, and there is only one holdout--Juror No. 8 (Henry Fonda).

The vote, which begins as 11-to-1, shifts gradually. Although the movie is clearly in favor of the Fonda position, not all of those voting "guilty" are portrayed negatively. One of the key characters is Juror No. 4 (E. G. Marshall), a stockbroker wearing rimless glasses, who depends on pure logic and tries to avoid emotion altogether. Another Juror No. 7 (Jack Warden), who has tickets to a baseball game, grows impatient and changes his vote just to hurry things along. Juror No. 11 (George Voskovec), an immigrant who speaks with an accent, criticizes him: "Who tells you that you have the right to play like this with a man's life?" Earlier, No. 11 was attacked as a foreigner: "They come over and in no time at all they're telling us how to run the show."

As the deliberation goes on, the jurors go on to vote not guilty - in order, Jurors 9, 5, 2, 11, 6, 7, 12, 1, 4, 10 and finally 3. Juror 9 makes up his mind at the very beginning, in a secret vote; after hearing his reasons and listening to the complaints of Jurors 7 and 10, Jurors 5 and 2 change their votes.

In one scene (43:57 to 45:30), juror 9 suggests that an elderly man who was a witness in the trial might have lied about hearing the voices of father and son because he wanted recognition. He looked at the witness for a long time. He had a split jacket under the shoulder. He was an old man in a torn jacket, and he walked very slowly to the stand, dragging his left leg and trying to hide it. He did it because he was ashamed. I think I know this man better than anyone here does. This is a quiet, insignificant old man who never received recognition for anything in his life. He has not had his name in the newspaper. No one knows him. No body quotes him. Nobody seeks his advice after 75 years. That is a very sad thing. He did not intentionally lie, but he may have made himself believe he heard them.

After Jurors 11 and 6 also decide on "not guilty," 7 becomes tired and also votes "not guilty" just so that the deliberation may end. Juror 12 changes his mind after voting "not guilty," but switches back moments after; the jury Foreman, 1, also votes "not guilty". Juror 10 loses all favor or respect after indulging in a bigoted rant, after which he is told to "shut up" by Juror 4 - who in turn is convinced that the witness who "saw" the murder may be inaccurate in her account owing to the fact that she may not have been wearing glasses at the time.

We see the murder weapon, a switch-blade knife, and hear the jurors debate the angle of the knife wound. We watch as Fonda imitates the shuffling step of the old man, a stroke victim, to see if he could have gotten to the door in time to see the murderer fleeing. In its ingenuity, in the way it balances one piece of evidence against another that seems contradictory, "12 Angry Men" is as meticulous as the summation of an Agatha

Christie thriller. But it is not about solving the crime. It is about sending a young man to die.

The defendant, when we glimpse him, looks "ethnic" but of no specific group. He could be Italian, Turkish, Indian, Jewish, Arabic, Mexican. His eyes are ringed with dark circles, and he looks exhausted and frightened. In the jury room, some jurors make veiled references to "these people." Finally Juror No. 10 (Ed Begley) begins a racist rant ("You know how these people lie. It's born in them. They don't know what the truth is. And let me tell you, they don't need any real big reason to kill someone, either...") As he continues, one juror after another stands up from the jury table and walks away, turning his back. Even those who think the defendant is guilty can't sit and listen to Begley's prejudice. The scene is one of the most powerful in the movie.

Last of all is the adamant Juror 3, who, after a long confrontation with Juror 8, breaks down after glancing at and furiously tearing up a picture of him and his son, whom he hasn't seen in two years (his angry rage suggesting a probable falling out with the boy). All jurors leave and clear the accused of all charges off-screen. In the epilogue, the friendly Jurors 8 and 9 exchange surnames (all jurors have remained nameless throughout the movie) and the movie ends.

In a length of only 95 minutes (it sometimes feels as if the movie is shot in real time), the jurors are all defined in terms of their personalities, backgrounds, occupations, prejudices and emotional tilts. Evidence is debated so completely that we feel we know as much as the jury does, especially about the old man who says he heard the murder and saw the defendant fleeing, and the lady across the street who says she saw it happen through the windows of a moving L train.

This is a film where tension comes from personality conflict, dialogue and body language, not action; where the defendant has been glimpsed only in a single brief shot; where logic, emotion and prejudice struggle to control the field.

## **The Grapes of Wrath – 1940 Movie**

The Grapes of Wrath is a 1940 drama. It stars Henry Fonda (nominated for best actor, won best actor by National Board of Review), Jane Darwell (won for best supporting actress, won best actress by National Board of Review). The movie received a best picture nomination and won best picture by National Board of Review. John Ford won best director from New York Film Critics Circle. It also received a nomination for best screenplay and for best sound. The American Film Institute selected it as one of the top 100 movies of the century.

Chapter 5 shows the first scene of the farmers tossed off their land by those with tractors. Of course, it was no one's fault. In chapter 18, the farmers now in California, the employer and the sheriff become their enemy.

Roger Ebert has some interesting comments that I have incorporated into the following discussion.

John Ford's "The Grapes of Wrath" is a parable about how a sharecropper's son, a barroom brawler, is converted into a union organizer. The message is boldly displayed, but told with characters of such sympathy and images of such beauty that audiences leave the theater feeling more pity than anger or resolve. It's a message movie, but not a recruiting poster.

The ideological journey of the hero, Tom Joad, can be seen by the two killings he is responsible for. The first one takes place in a saloon before the action begins, and Tom describes it to a former preacher: "We was drunk. He got a knife in me and I laid him out with a shovel. Knocked his head plum to squash." After serving four years, Tom is paroled and returns to his family farm in Oklahoma, only to learn the Joads have been "traced off the land" and are joining the desperate migration to California. Near the end of the film, in chapter 21, after seeing deputies and thugs beat and shoot at strikers, he is once again attacked, this time by a "tin badge" with a club. He snatches away the club, and kills him. The lesson is clear: Tom has learned who his real enemies are, and is working now with more deserving targets.

The movie was based on John Steinbeck's novel, arguably the most effective social document of the 1930s. John Ford had documented in his movies the Westward movement of American settlement. John Ford was the director of "The Iron Horse" (1924), about the dream of a railroad to the West, and made many other films about the white migration into Indian lands, including his Cavalry trilogy ("Fort Apache," "She Wore a Yellow Ribbon," "Rio Grande"). "The Grapes of Wrath" tells the sad end of the dream. Bankers and big landholders force the small shareholders who staked their claims 50 years earlier off their land. In a scene in Chapter 5, we hear, "Who's the Shawnee Land and Cattle Company?" asks Muley, a neighbor of the Joads who refuses to sell. "It ain't anybody," says a land agent. "It's a company."

The movie finds a larger socialist lesson in the situation. Of course, Tom did not know the end of the story, about how the Okies would go to work in war industries and their children would prosper more in California than they would have in Oklahoma, and their grandchildren would star in Beach Boys songs. It is easy to forget that for many, "The Grapes of Wrath" had a happy, unwritten, fourth act.

When Steinbeck published his novel in 1939, it was acclaimed as a masterpiece, won the Pulitzer Prize, was snatched up by Darryl F. Zanuck of 20th Century-Fox and assigned to his top director, John Ford. It expressed the nation's rage about the Depression in poetic, Biblical terms, and its dialogue does a delicate little dance around words like "agitators" and "Reds" in Chapter 25. Chapter 23 shows the effect of the progressive efforts of the Federal Government and the New Deal, protecting the poor from local police and other local officials. Little wonder that people of that generation looked to the Federal Government for help.

Even though the Joad farm is a studio set, Ford liked to shoot on location, and records a journey down Route 66 from the Dust Bowl through New Mexico and Arizona, past shabby gas stations and roadside diners. The dialogue sometimes grows a little too preachy to fit within the simple vernacular of farmers. Tom Joad's famous farewell to Ma in Chapter 29, 1:59:46 to 2:03:32, "I've been thinkin' about our people living like pigs. I've been thinking about good, rich land layin' fallow. One guy with a million acres and a hundred thousand farmers starvin'. And I've been wondering if all our folks got together and yelled." ... "Maybe I can find out what's wrong and do something about it." "Maybe it's like Casy says. A fella ain't got a soul of his own, just a little piece of a big soul. The one big soul that belongs to everybody. Then, I will be everywhere you look. Wherever there's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever there's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there ..." I will be in the way guys yell when they're mad. I'll be in the way



kids laugh when they're hungry and they know supper's ready. And when people are eatin' the stuff they raise and livin' in the houses they build I'll be there too."

Tom Joad is one of the great American movie characters, so pure and simple and simply there. Even in his silences, he has been pondering Preacher's conversion from religion to union politics. "That's why I can't be a preacher. A preacher's gotta know, and I don't know." We are not surprised when Tom tells Ma, Just as, in the dream of One Big Union, transcendentalism meets Marxism.

Fonda and Jane Darwell are the actors everyone remembers, although John Carradine's Casy is also instrumental. She has the final word ("We'll go on forever, Pa. 'Cause ... we're the people!"). The novel of course ends with a famous scene that stunned its readers, as Rose of Sharon, having lost her baby, offers her milk-filled breast to a starving man in a railroad car. Hollywood, which stretched itself in allowing Clark Gable to say "damn" a year earlier in "Gone With the Wind," was not ready for that scene, even by implication, in 1940. Since the original audiences would have known it was left out, the film ended with safe sentiment instead of Steinbeck's bold melodramatic masterstroke.

One wonders if American audiences will ever again be able to understand the original impact of this material, on the page and on the screen. The novel and movie do last, because they are founded in real experience and feeling. "The Grapes of Wrath" shows half a nation with the economic rug pulled out from under it. The story, which seems to be about the resiliency and courage of "the people," is built on a foundation of fear: Fear of losing jobs, land, and self-respect. To those who had felt that fear, who had gone hungry or been homeless, it would never become dated. Its sense of injustice is still relevant.