

Adaptations

Emma Collins

What are film adaptations?

A film adaptation can be defined as any source that is literary in its original form, which has been adapted into the film format. Some familiar examples include the recent *Spiderman* movies with Tobey Maguire (2002, 2004, and 2007), and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, the adaptations of which include both the cartoon short version that many of us grew up watching each Christmas (originally broadcast in 1966), and the more recent Jim Carrey version (released in 2000). An adaptation is a source that has been recreated based upon similar themes, plots, or the entire story of a comic, play, poem, or novel.

Many of us are familiar with the phrase, "books made into movies," but, as far as adaptations are concerned, it is no longer just about books being made into movies, as popular comic books and television shows are also frequently "adapted" into films. Stories many of us are familiar with are being reinterpreted for the big screen. Some teens may have read the book before they saw the movie. Some teens may think the book is better, while some may think the movie is better. Others may be satisfied that a film's story remains faithful to the contents of a book, with specific scenes and character sequences relating

back to the original story or plot remaining intact. Others may not even be aware that many of the films they see are based upon best sellers or classic novels.

With the increasing reliance on the Internet as a resource for easily acquiring music and movies, as well as the option of programmed digital cable, in which one has the option of fast forwarding through programs and films even as they are watching them, perhaps respect for reading and stories in the literary form is fading away. Rather than read the book, many choose to watch the movie instead, believing that if they are told that a movie relates to a particular book or author, then why would it be a necessary experience to read the literary source?

In many cases, the book is better than the movie, and in many other ways, a viewer misses out on the personal experience of imagining what only a reader can experience when left to his or her own thoughts and reflections. Reading is important because it invites individuals to express their personal creativity and interpretations of a story, rather than relying on how a director, producer, actors, and scriptwriters interpret the story for the viewer, through various pairs of eyes and agendas.

Adaptations provide an opportunity to enjoy existing stories and characters in different ways, and the value of both the written word and the moving image are important when exploring one's personal perspective on the subject of books versus movies. Often, one does not fully understand the context a book was written in if one only sees the movie. Conversely, if a person skips the movie adaptation of a book, he or she may also be missing out. Exploring both forms feeds into one's individual creativity, as well as the understanding of people, events, and the world. Therefore, reading and seeing movies are both important activities, and should be encouraged.

Here is a closer look at some popular adaptations.

Beauty & the Beast

We all know the fairy tale story of Beauty and the Beast: a motherless young woman named "Belle" ("Beauty" in French, where the folk tale originated) lives alone with her father, a poor inventor. The other villagers believe that the father is mentally ill, and they ridicule him and look down upon him.

One day, Belle's father leaves on a journey to try and sell some of his wares in a nearby town. However, he loses his way in a fog while traveling through an enchanted, dark forest. He finds him-

self at the gates of a large, dark castle. It appears as though no one has lived in the castle for some time. Cold to the bone and lost, he enters the castle to make himself warm by the fire, only to find the place occupied by a Beast, who is bitter and lonely from the spell that was put upon him long ago, when he had done an injustice to a poor, traveling beggar woman.

The beggar woman had come to the prince's door one night, much like how Belle's father had come to the door, lost and cold, and the prince refused the woman's entrance due to her haggard appearance. Upon refusal, the old woman's form melted away to reveal a beautiful enchantress, who then placed a spell upon the castle, and all who lived there. The Prince was turned into an ugly beast for his punishment. Meanwhile, the servants were turned into inanimate objects, so that the Beast would be left without human contact. If he were to go out into the public eye, he would be taunted, or hunted and killed for his frightening form.

Bitter and angry about his punishment, and also lonely, the Beast imprisons Belle's father. In the mean time, Belle sets off after her father, because she is worried about him losing his way in a storm. Belle soon discovers the castle, and the Beast. She makes an agreement to trade herself for her father, so he can be freed. The story progresses and the most unlikely of friendships is formed, as well as a sharing of love. And of

course, at the end of it all, they live happily ever after.

By nature of its being a fairy tale, the telling of *Beauty & the Beast* exists in many variations across cultures, with several cultures having their own twist on the tale. In some cases, the Beast is punished simply for being so frightening. Ironically, however, this punishment usually does not occur until the Beast has learned the value of love, hospitality and generosity.

Each adapted version of this very old fairy tale expresses the events and characters of the story differently, though ultimately, the end result is usually "happily ever after." The essence of the tale has been around for centuries in both written and oral form. BalletMet, a Ballet dance production studio, in association with the Gerard Charles Foundation (1997), interpreted the origin of the story as being traceable back to the stories of Cupid and Psyche, Oedipus, and Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* of the second century A.D. BalletMet also explains that the tale was first collected by Gianfrancesco Straparola in 1550-1553, within a tale called *The Nights of Straparola* (1550-1553). Straparola's tale also was acted and performed as a ballet (please see Gerard Charles and the Columbus Foundation, 1997).

Versions of The Beauty and the Beast story differ on another level, as well, in that each version presents the Beast in a variety of forms. For exam-

ple, the earliest French version portrays the enchanted prince as a king, while his beastly form is that of a serpent (Charles, 1997).

FAIRY TALE VERSION

The Beauty and the Beast fairy tale originated a long time ago, possibly even before the German Grimm Brothers fairy tales. More recently, the tale was adapted and directed into a ballet by David Nixon, a choreographer and graduate of the National Ballet of Canada. This fairy tale also has long been presented in France as a ballet.



BOOK VERSION

Title: *Beauty: A Retelling of Beauty & the Beast*,
Author: Robin McKinley
Publisher: HarperCollins
Date: 1993

This novel stays quite faithful to the traditional fairy tale we all know and are familiar with. Unlike the Disney version, however, there aren't magical characters like a talking candle or a tea pot, and the "magic" in this story is more traditional in the fairy tale sense of the word. The magic is created in part by the author's narrative voice and in other ways by the reader's imagination. The author encourages the reader to ponder the mysterious powers of romantic love. One also may recognize similar plot ele-

ments between McKinley's novel and the Disney animated version, as both adaptations are similar in several respects.

Like many fairy tales and folk tales that by nature have origins that are mysterious and not fully determined, and which were written by an unknown author, this is a well known tale of love and the perception of real beauty, as opposed to superficial or on-the-surface beauty.



FILM VERSIONS

Title: *Beauty & the Beast*
Director: Jean Cocteau
Date: (1946)
Studio: MorningStar Entertainment
Audience: Teens and Adults

Title: *Beauty & the Beast*
Director: Edward L. Cahn
Date: 1962
Studio: MGM
Audience: Teens and Adults

Title: *Beauty & the Beast*
Director: Juraj Herz
Date: 1983
Studio: Unknown (German)
Audience: Teens and Adults



Title: *Beauty & the Beast*
Director: Daniel Attias, and Frank Beascoechea
Date: 1987

Studio: Television Series
Audience: Teens and Adults



Title: *Beauty & the Beast*
Date: 1991
Studio: Walt Disney Pictures
Audience: All ages

Title: *Beauty & the Beast*
Director: Bob Hsieh
Date: 2003
Studio: Golden Films

Beloved

A captivating tale of hauntings and dead baby ghosts, Morrison tells the story of a character named Sethe, whose baby daughter returns to haunt her in the form of a young girl, stirring up trouble for Sethe and her living daughter Denver, as well as Sethe's old friend and lover Paul D. Sethe, who escaped slavery at the brutal cost of losing the lives of several of her children, must face the horrors of her past and move beyond the tragic loss of her family and her sense of self.

BOOKVERSION

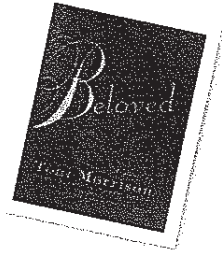
Title: *Beloved*

Author: Toni Morrison

Date: 1987

Audience: 17+

Notes: Won the Pulitzer Prize



"Everybody knew what she was called, but nobody anywhere knew her name. Disremembered and unaccounted for, she cannot be lost because no one is looking for her, and even if they were, how can they call her if they don't know her name? Although she has claim, she is not claimed." Chapter 28, p. 274

Notable Quotes from *Beloved*:

"124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom." Chapter 1 p. 3.

"The picture is still there, and what's more, if you go there -- you who never was there -- if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's all over -- over and done with -- it's going to always be there waiting for you." Chapter 3, p. 36

"I got a tree on my back and a haint in my house, and nothing in between but the daughter I am holding in my arms. No more running -- from nothing. I will never run from another thing on this earth. I took one journey and I paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something, Paul D Garner: it cost too much! Do you hear me? It cost too much." Chapter 1, p. 15

FILMVERSION

Title: *Beloved*

Director: Jonathan Demme

Studio: Walt Disney Pictures

Audience: 17+



Buffy The Vampire Slayer

In this story, a teen cheerleader becomes the "chosen one." Chosen for what, you ask? She is chosen to be the vampire slayer in her home town, which happens to be built over a mouth into hell.

Throughout the movie, television series, and various spin-offs, Buffy experiences the danger of being pursued by blood sucking vampires. Buffy comes to Sunnydale and battles the vamps with her coy, cute one-liners, and her Valley girl voice and looks. Of course, she has some help from her friends in fighting the demons and vampires.

In the television series, the meeting place where the slayer and her crew plan and strategize is the

school library, aplenty with research and information to help a slayer kick some vampire butt!

BOOK VERSIONS

Simon Spotlight Entertainment publishes a series of Buffy The Vampire novels.

FILMVERSION

Title: *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*

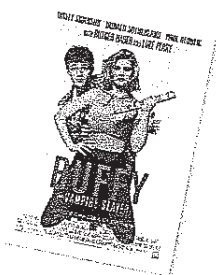
Director: Fran Rubel Kuzui

Date: 1992

Studio: Fox

Rating: PG-13

Audience: Young Teens and Adults



TVVERSION

Title: *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*

Date: 1997-2003



GAMES

There are several video, board, and card game versions of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*.

Charlie And The Chocolate Factory

BOOK VERSION

Title: *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*

Author: Roald Dahl

Date: 1964

Audience: Children and Teens

FILMVERSIONS

Title: *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*

Director: Mel Stuart

Date: 1971

Studio: Warner Home Video

Audience: All Ages

Title: *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*

Director: Mel Stuart

Date: 1971

Audience: All Ages

Title: *Charlie & the Chocolate Factory*

Director: Tim Burton

Date: 2005

Studio: Warner Home Video



Emma

Emma is the tale of a match maker whose "match making mischief forces her to face the possibility of love and a match for herself."

BOOK VERSION

Title: *Emma*

Author: Jane Austen

Date: 1815

Audience: Mature and older teens and adults

FILMVERSIONS

Title: *Emma*

Director: John Glenister

Date: 1972

Studio: BBC

Audience: Older women, Adults, older teens

Title: *Emma*

Director: Diarmuid Lawrence

Pub Date: 1996

Studio: A & E Home Video

Audience: Older Teens, mainly young women, and adults

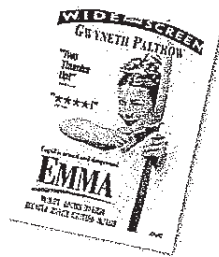
Title: *Emma*

Director: Douglas McGrath

Date: 2003 (DVD), 1996 (VHS)

Studio: Buena Vista Home Entertainment

Audience: Teens and Adults



Eragon

If you haven't read the book and watch the movie first, you're missing out on important character developments in the novel, which the film does not address. To be fair, if the director did address every plot element in the original story, the resulting film would be very long, perhaps even longer than the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

You may be fascinated to learn that the author was only sixteen years old when he wrote and published the first book of the *Eragon* series. This fact alone may peak your curiosity and draw you further into reading this novel. When the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy was released, millions of readers could, at long last, view their favourite J.R.R. Tolkien tales on the big screen. Since then, fantasy-genre filmmaking has been playing copycat, perhaps in an effort to match the cinematographic wonders of the beloved trilogy. However, with smaller budgets and less time invested into creating a good story, while also perhaps presenting stories that are not as dearly loved as Tolkien's books, subsequent attempts to duplicate *Lord of the Rings'* success have fallen short.

If you like dragons, and a young boy finding the "hero" in himself as he saves the world from the fate of evil, you'll enjoy reading *Eragon*. If you do read and enjoy Paolini's trilogy a great deal, however, you will probably be very disappointed with the movies.

BOOKVERSION

Title: *Eragon*

Author: Christopher Paolini

Date: 2004

Publisher: Knopf Books for Young Readers

Audience: Teens and Adults

FILMVERSION

Title: *Eragon*
Director: Stefen Fangmeier
Date: 2007
Studio: 20th Century Fox



Sin City

COMICVERSION

Title: *Sin City*
Author/Artist: Frank Miller
Audience: Older teens and Adults

FILMVERSION

Title: *Sin City*
Director: Frank Miller, Robert Rodriguez
Date: 2006
Studio: Alliance (Universal)

Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants

BOOKVERSION

Title: *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*
Author: Ann Brashares
Date: 2003
Publisher: Delacorte
Audience: Young Teens and Adults

MOVIEVERSION

Title: *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*
Director: Ken Kwapis
Date: 2005
Studio: Warner Home Videos
Audience: Women of all Ages

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

MOVIEVERSIONS

Title: *Storybook Favorites: The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, and other tales*
Directors: Jack Kinney, Clyde Geronimi, and George Scribner
Date: 1996
Studio: Walt Disney Home Video
Audience: All Ages



Title: *Sleepy Hollow*
Director: Tim Burton
Date: 1999
Studio: Paramount Pictures
Audience: Mature, Rated R

Title: *The Haunted Pumpkin Of Sleepy Hollow*
Date: 2004
Studio: Abbey Home Media
Audience: All Ages

Spider-Man

COMICVERSION

Title: *The Amazing Spider-Man*

Creator: Stan Lee

First Issue: 1963



FILMVERSIONS

Title: *Spider-Man*

Director: Sam Raimi

Date: 2002

Studios: Columbia and Marvel

Title: *Spider-Man 2*

Director: Sam Raimi

Date: 2004

Studios: Columbia and Marvel

Title: *Spider-Man 3*

Director: Sam Raimi

Date: 2007

Studios: Columbia and Marvel

Ten Things I Hate About You

BOOKVERSION

Title: *The Taming of the Shrew*

Author: William Shakespeare

Date: ca. 1623

Audience: Teens and Adults

MOVIEVERSIONS

Title: *The Taming of the Shrew*

Pub Date: 1929

Audience: All Ages

Title: *The Taming of the Shrew*

Director: Franco Zeffirelli

Date: 1967

Studio: Columbia Tri Star

Audience: All Ages

Title: *The Taming of the Shrew*

Director: Kirk Browning

Date: 1976

Studio: Kulter Video

Audience: All ages

Title: *The Taming of the Shrew*

Director: Peter Dews

Pub Date: 1983

Studio: Kultur

Audience: All Ages

Title: *10 Things I Hate About You*

Director: Gil Junger

Date: 1999

Studio: Walt Disney Home Video

Audience: Teens, PG-13

This film is loosely based upon William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. The setting takes place in modern times, with the basic plot remaining faithful to Shakespeare. The film's plot revolves around a competition to take "mean sister" Kat, out on a date, as opposed to trying to marry the mean sister off, which is what occurs in the original Shakespeare version. Filled with humour, and surprising and witty elements of romantic teen love, this film is a fun party movie for friends, although reading the play is recommended. The film is not very similar to the play, except in the general sense that a boy tries to win the love of "Kat" and "tame her."

More Examples of Adaptations

A Wrinkle in Time

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Batman

Because of Winn Dixie

Charlotte's Web

Cold Mountain

Degrassi

Gilmore Girls

Hamlet

Harry Potter (All)

Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy

How To Eat Fried Worms

I Robot

Little Women

Lord of the Flies

Lord of the Rings Trilogy

Miss Potter

Mrs. Brisby and the Rats of NIMH

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion the

Witch and the Wardrobe

Oliver Twist

Pride and Prejudice

Romeo and Juliet

Sweet Valley High

The Cat in the Hat

The Grinch That Stole Christmas

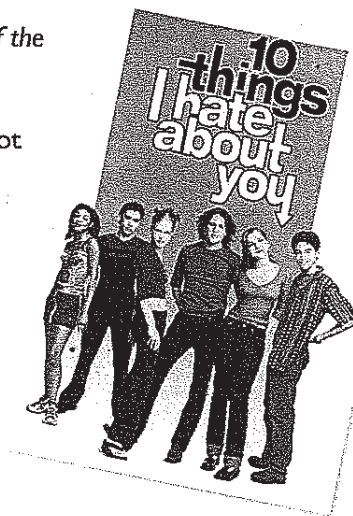
The Hobbit

The Indian in the Cupboard

The Nativity Story

The O.C.

Wide Sargasso Sea



References

Charles, G. (1997). *Beauty and the Beast*. The Columbus Foundation, *BalletMet*. Retrieved April 8, 2007, from <http://www.balletmet.org/Notes/StoryOrigin.html>