Bridge to Terabithia As A Film For Children: Opinion Essay

The film Bridge to Terabithia is a fun-filled family-friendly movie, surrounding the sweet friendship between Jesse Aarons (Josh Hutcherson) and Leslie Burke (AnnaSophia Robb). Starting off with a typical Disney theme of friendship, it suddenly becomes a tearjerker about grief. It was adapted from the book by Katherine Paterson, which was based on a true tragedy. Being a Disney movie about childhood friendships, naturally, Bridge to Terabithia is aimed toward children, but it's easy to judge the appropriateness of talking about death and grief to a younger audience.

This is one of those movies I'd always watch as a kid. The animation of the trolls in Terabithia and the imagination Jesse and Leslie had in their magical little world had me excited to watch it every time. Watching it now, being more grown-up, I've picked up themes in the movie. Watching the friendship of the poor artist and the free-spirited new kid grow throughout the movie until the tragic death of Leslie. Watching this as a kid, I never realized how Jesse's parents must have felt when they heard the news and they couldn't find him. Now I know how hard it must have been on everyone involved, especially Jess. I can't imagine ever losing any of my best friends. The screenwriter does a great job of showing these themes and getting it across to the audience, but only to the more mature audience.

There are multiple themes displayed throughout the movie. The big ones are friendship and grief. The friendship in this movie specifically is good for a child to see and hear. It teaches them what true friendship is. The first time I watched the movie, being about five at the time, I hadn't fully grasped the concept of true friendship. The theme of grief might be a bit harder for a younger audience to hear and have explained to them. Especially through a movie. The book version of this story was banned because of how difficult it is for some children to hear about death. When I watched it as a kid, my brain blocked that part of the movie out of my head. Re-watching it now, that part of the movie brought me to tears.

The death of a child and the depression of their friend who was left behind is surprising coming from a Disney film. Especially with this being based on true events. Disney has had death in their movies before, but it's mostly been an animated lion (The Lion King) or fish (Finding Nemo). The image of a kid dying could be hard to understand for someone younger than 10. With this being a Disney movie, parents may just put it on for their little ones without thinking twice, but with themes like this, parents may have to evaluate the maturity of their children before they put this movie on for them.

This film came from a book that was written for the author's (Katherine Paterson) son. The movie relates closely to the book. There's the obvious, being able to see Terabithia versus having to imagine what it would be like, and there's the less obvious like when Leslie gave the paint colors to Jess. (birthday instead of Christmas) I enjoyed the similarity between the book and the movie because there's nothing more disappointing than a movie skipping an important part of the book.