

F O C U S O N T H E F A M I L Y ®

MOVIE NIGHTS *for kids*

25 Fun Flicks to Inspire,
Entertain and Teach Your Children

Introduction by John Fornof
Writer for Adventures in Odyssey®



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Wheaton, Illinois

Movie Nights for Kids

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Introduction

Getting the Most out of Movie Nights

What's wrong with me? What's with the tears? Good grief, it's only a movie. Worse yet, it's a cartoon!

Okay, I've done it now. I've admitted that I teared up while watching *Toy Story 2*. Go ahead and do that little chuckle thing. But what did *you* do when you heard the song of Jessie, the cowgirl doll? The little girl who once loved Jessie has grown up now. She's filled her life with teenage things, and there's no longer a place for the favorite little cowgirl she used to play with. Jessie is dumped into a cardboard box labeled "Yard Sale," her once bright eyes now questioning, as the grown-up girl drives away for good.

My kids were oblivious to my blubbering as I listened to Jessie sing her song. Maybe that's a good thing. But I was impressed by something: the power of movies to move us. When a movie is done right, it's a *moving* picture.

Think about it—why do you enjoy watching movies? I think the enjoyment comes from what we take home with us. Movies at their best give us insight into our own lives. Movies magnify life. The big screen beckons us to leave small thinking, to live life large.

Does your child think like this as he munches on M&Ms, his eyes fixated on the screen? Probably not. That's why you and I as parents read books like *Movie Nights for Kids*. We want our kids to learn to think critically about what they view, while they enjoy a good story with some take-away value.

MOVIE NIGHTS FOR KIDS

We also want our kids to experience the fun and fascination of good films, without exposing them to the grunge and grime of moral decay that's so prevalent in today's entertainment. Do you ever feel like I do, though—like Hollywood is out of touch with parents' values and concerns? How else do you explain a movie like *The Cat in the Hat* that's targeted for kids, but filled with sexual innuendo? What were these people thinking?

And yet, when Hollywood does it right we parents line up and buy in the millions. We're looking for movies that reaffirm our values, not ridicule them. We're looking for a tour guide through the land mines. That's what this book is about.

Take a look through the list of movies we've included for you. We can't guarantee moral perfection here. But we can tell you that each movie on this list is an enjoyable family film with a strong moral compass.

And the best part: For each film, we give you fun and thought-provoking ways to connect with your kids and build some memories as you experience the movie together. In each review, you'll find:

Themes: We zero in on the moral heart of the movie.

Cautions: We give you "red flags" about any questionable content. (We also recommend that you preview each movie before showing it to your child.)

Talking Points: Use these questions to spark a meaningful dialogue with your child.

Bible Bookmarks: Discover what God has to say about the movie's themes.

Follow-Up Activities: These are fun ideas to help your kids relate to the moral message of the movie—everything from creating a maze to helping them craft their own "stained glass" windows to taking a field trip to a riding stable.

Some Thoughts About a Family Movie Night

When Jesus wanted to make a point, He told stories. A party-animal son returns home to his dad. An anxious investor buries his client's money. A man rescued from debtors' prison throttles his friend who owes him two bits. These are stories we remember, stories of forgiveness, fear, hypocrisy.

The same is true today. Jesus still talks to us through stories. And if we're listening to Him, we'll gain insight as we watch. *Movie Nights for*

Kids isn't about preaching to your offspring. It's about discovering truths together. *Finding Nemo* is a good example. Kids can witness the dire consequences of disobedience. But we parents can pick up an important truth as well: Being overprotective can suffocate our children's growth.

We encourage you to pray before you watch each of these movies. That may sound strange. But try it. Ask God to teach you and your family His truth. You may start enjoying movies on an entirely new level.

And there's nothing like the closeness of your family cuddled up on the sofa with some pretzels or popcorn, watching a movie together. Now, with *Movie Nights for Kids*, you can also engage with your kids afterward. Learn what's going on inside their heads and hearts. Share with them what *you're* learning. And guide them in a way that inspires them to impact their culture (*in* the world) without being corrupted by it (*not of* the world).

Some Cautions

Take note of our "Cautions" section. To be forewarned is to be fast-forwarded. Generally, you'll find that the TV version of a movie filters out most profanity. But if you rent or buy prerecorded movies, an alternative is a filtering device that automatically blocks most of the bad words. However, while we've tried to select movies that have no profanities and questionable content, sometimes very worthy stories have a few. If your family finds these unacceptable, then skip the movies that have them. We don't encourage anyone to violate his or her family's standards.

Keep in mind your child's maturity and sensitivity level as well. Some kids take certain scenes—such as a parent dying—in stride, while others may be traumatized by the same scene. That's another good reason to preview and pray before you watch—and pray about *whether* you should watch.

Don't Overdo It

We've given you several talking points and activities for most of the movies because we know that your kids will want to watch certain favorites over and over. You don't have to discuss all the talking points in one sitting. You may want to reserve some for another movie night, or strike up a casual conversation later in the week at the dinner table or in the car. Feel free to choose the activities that are most suited to your children's ages, maturity levels, and interests. Above all, a movie night should be fun!

MOVIE NIGHTS FOR KIDS

The Heart of *Movie Nights for Kids*

As parents, our white-haired friends tell us that the time we have to raise our children will pass before we know it. All too soon, our kids will be packing their bags and hugging us good-bye as they head off to college and adulthood.

Maybe this is the pang we feel as we watch Jessie the cowgirl sing. We know the wide-eyed wonder of our little girl or boy will one day fade, and all we'll be left with is the memory of how we invested our time with them.

So let's make the most of these days with our kids. Take them to the park and swing on the swings with them, enjoy an ice cream cone together, go on a nature hike and discover God's handiwork. And when it comes to cuddle-time on the couch watching a movie, let's make the most of this time as well. With *Movie Nights for Kids* as a guide, gather the family, grab a snack, pop in the DVD, and let's make some memories together.

—John Fornof, writer for *Adventures in Odyssey* and *Ribbits!*

THE MOVIES



Anne of Green Gables

Rated: G

Themes: Friendship, loyalty, forgiveness, growth, value of family (even nontraditional family), acceptance

Running Time: 3 hours, 15 minutes (can be watched in two parts)

Starring: Megan Follows as Anne Shirley, Colleen Dewhurst as Marilla Cuthbert, Richard Farnsworth as Matthew Cuthbert, Patricia Hamilton as Rachel Lynde, Schuyler Grant as Diana Barry, and Jonathan Crombie as Gilbert Blythe

Directed by: Kevin Sullivan



Cautions

Anne is a normal girl who gets herself into lots of trouble, yet each incident is handled appropriately by her caretakers. In one scene, Diana accidentally gets drunk on some mild wine, thinking it is the cordial that Marilla gave the girls permission to drink.



Story Summary

If you haven't yet met Anne Shirley, then now is the time! Anne is a delightful young orphan who can get herself (and others) into trouble without even trying. She constantly makes mistakes, yet she is lovable, kind, deeply loyal, and great fun. Her prodigious imagination is a source of both laughter and calamity.

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Part 1

This three-hour story begins with 12-year-old Anne walking through the forest, reading her favorite Tennyson poem, “The Lady of Shalott.” Because she is so involved in the story, she is late returning from her errands and is harshly punished by the woman for whom she works.

Anne lives with a family, working as a caretaker for their three sets of twins. When the woman’s husband dies, Anne is once again placed in an orphanage. But soon, through a mistake, she is sent to live on Prince Edward Island with an elderly brother and sister, Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert. The Cuthberts decide that, although they wanted a boy to help Matthew with the farm work, they will keep Anne for a probationary period. Anne, with her ability to get into trouble, immediately is involved in several situations that could convince the Cuthberts to ship her off to the horrible Mrs. Blewett (who also has twins), or back to the orphanage. But Anne has a tendency to weasel her way into people’s hearts, and she so desperately wants a family of her own that Matthew and Marilla decide to keep her.

Anne is immediately thrust into the pastoral life of Avonlea, finding a world she’s never experienced. She is introduced to the sweet, naïve Diana Barry at a picnic and they become instant friends. Diana never seems to do anything wrong, while Anne’s quick temper and her sharp eye for justice cause her to over-react and get into trouble.

Anne is enrolled in school, where she excels in all subjects but continually butts heads with a boy named Gilbert Blythe who started off on the wrong foot by calling her “Carrots” the first day of school. Gilbert could not have called her anything more galling, for she detests her red hair.

Anne has a fierce desire to succeed in life and studies hard to be at



the top of her class. She has to battle a teacher who doesn't see value in anyone except his favorite student, Prissy Andrews, and is played by Jose Pye, a snotty girl who looks down on Anne because she's jealous that Gilbert gives the lowly orphan his attention.

Though at first Anne is on probation with Marilla and Matthew, she is soon part of the family. Still, she is falsely accused of stealing, tries to dye her hated red hair black, hurts her ankle when she falls off a roof while showing off, and then hurts her other ankle falling into an abandoned well.

Anne tries to do well as she grows up, and in the final scenes of part 1, she is excited to be serving tea to Diana while Marilla leaves them to act like grown-ups. Marilla tells Anne that she is allowed to serve the prized raspberry cordial to her guest. Anne searches for the bottle, but not really knowing what she's looking for, retrieves the wrong bottle. She serves Diana, then retreats to the kitchen to finish the preparations for tea. Diana downs nearly the entire bottle, becoming more giggly and tipsy with each glass. By the time Anne is ready to serve the food, Diana is so nauseated she only wants to go home. Anne helps her get home, where Diana's mom is horrified to find her daughter drunk and sick. She blames Anne for doing it on purpose. Anne is clueless, not really knowing what's wrong with Diana. Part 1 ends with Mrs. Barry forbidding Anne to ever speak with Diana again.

Part 2

Anne is sad and lonely, watching Diana Barry from a distance. Diana is obviously sad as well. The only bright spot in Anne's life is her new teacher, Miss Stacey. Miss Stacey is an encourager and believes in all the children, giving them educational experiences outside the classroom and preparing them for college and life beyond school. She and Anne develop a special friendship.

One winter night, long after Diana and Anne have been forced to part as friends, Diana races to Green Gables because her younger sister is terribly sick with the croup. Diana's parents have gone to a political rally, leaving her in charge, but she has no idea how to help her sister. Fortunately, Anne has dealt with the croup many times with the twins she used to care for, and she knows exactly what to do. When the doctor finally arrives, the fever has broken, and the little girl is breathing fine

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again. The doctor commends Anne for saving the child's life.

As a result, Mrs. Barry regrets her earlier decision and not only allows Anne and Diana to be friends again, but also invites Anne to a ball. At first, Marilla won't let her go, angry that Mrs. Barry would accuse Anne of purposely getting Diana drunk. But Matthew steps in and convinces Marilla that the ball would be good for Anne. He also buys Anne her dream dress—one with puffed sleeves.

At the ball, Anne's unforgiving attitude toward Gilbert is evident. For a moment, at Diana's encouragement, she thinks about making up with Gilbert. But then he responds rudely to her, and she returns to her angry cave of unforgiveness.

That night, she and Diana are thrilled that they get to sleep in the guest bedroom. They race to the room and leap onto the bed—surprising and scaring Aunt Josephine half to death. The girls knew Aunt Josephine was coming to visit, but they thought she was not going to be there until the following night. Aunt Josephine is convinced that they scared her on purpose.

The next morning, however, Anne disarmingly apologizes to Aunt Josephine, and they become friends. Anne says later to Diana, "She is a kindred spirit." Aunt Josephine's entrance into Anne's life adds a new dimension to the girl's future. Now Anne has someone else who cares about her, and she has an older woman friend to spend time with and confide in.

Back home, Anne's imagination gets her into trouble again as she plays out her favorite poem, "The Lady of Shalott." The skiff she is floating in sinks, and she has to cling to a bridge until Gilbert Blythe comes along. She's humiliated and angry that he should be the one to rescue her.

Anne grows up quickly, performing an epic poem at the White Sands Hotel, winning the Avery Scholarship, and getting ready to go to college. Matthew and Marilla are very proud of her accomplishments. She is eager to continue her education, but Matthew dies suddenly, leaving Green Gables in a precarious position. Anne decides to forgo college to teach in a neighboring community's school. Gilbert is to teach at the Avonlea school because of his family's situation. Yet, with extreme kindness and sacrifice, Gilbert trades teaching positions with Anne so she can be close to Green Gables and Marilla.

Marilla confesses to Anne that as a young person she'd had an unforgiving attitude toward Gilbert's father and thought she could punish



him by not forgiving him. Yet now she realizes that was foolish and wrong, and she tells Anne she wishes she'd forgiven him years before. Anne decides to forgive Gilbert, and the story ends with a hint of potential romance (finally!) between the two.

Before You Watch

Get out an atlas and find Prince Edward Island. Go to the library, or search the Internet to find out more about PEI, its history and customs.

Talk about how things have changed in the last hundred years or so. Have your children call their grandparents and ask them what things have changed since they were young. What did you (parents) have as children that no longer exists? (Wax paper bags for sandwiches! Vinyl



records!) Or what new things have been invented since you were a child? Remind your children to watch for things in the movie that are different from today.



Bible Bookmarks

Proverbs 17:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Luke 6:37; Ephesians 4:32; Matthew 18:21-22

Talking Points, Part 1

1. Would you like a friend like Anne Shirley? Why or why not? What do you like most about her? What don't you like about her? Read Proverbs 17:17. Does this verse describe Anne? How? Does it describe anyone you know?

2. Anne hates the color of her hair. What do you think about her hair? If you could change anything about yourself, what would it be? Why?

3. Marilla says Anne's first prayer sounds like she's writing a business letter to God. Who do you think God is like when you pray? A boss? A policeman? A friend? A parent? A wish catalog to order from?

4. Anne apologized to Rachel Lynde. Did she really mean it? Was she really sorry? What was she sorry for? Is an apology really an apology if you don't mean it? Explain.

5. Read Luke 6:37. Throughout the first half of the story, Anne is judged for being an orphan. People assume she will have bad manners

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and do bad things just because she doesn't have parents. Is that right according to the verse you just read? What are some of the things people think Anne did that she really didn't do? Have you ever thought someone at school would have bad manners and do bad things just because they looked a certain way or had a different kind of family than you're used to?



6. Whose fault do you think it is that Diana drank too much of the wine and got sick? Why? Is there ever a situation when something happens that is no one's fault?

Talking Points, Part 2

1. Miss Stacey says to Anne, "The truth will set you free." Do you think this statement is correct? What about lying? Does that get you out of trouble? How can lying do the opposite of setting you free? Find the verse in the Bible where Jesus says, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

2. "Tomorrow is always fresh, without any mistakes in it." What do you think of that statement? Does it make you excited or scared? Why? Have you ever had a day when you didn't sin or make any mistakes? (Everyone be honest!)

3. Which teacher do you like better? Mr. Phillips or Miss Stacey? Why? Is Mr. Phillips fair to Anne?

4. Anne studies hard to be at the top of her class. In this story, can you see how working and studying hard bring good things to Anne? What are those things? After watching this movie, how do you feel about working hard in school?

5. Anne gets mad at Gilbert Blythe at the very beginning of the story. Do you remember why? Throughout the story Anne refuses to forgive Gilbert and holds a grudge (she stays mad). Do you think Gilbert deserves for her to hold a grudge for so many years over that one little thing? How long do you think someone should hold a grudge? Have you ever held a grudge when someone hurt you? How did that feel to hold the grudge? What does God say we are to do? See Matthew 18:21-22 and 6:14-15. How hard is that?



Follow-Up Activities

ANNE OF GREEN GABLES

No TV Zone

Make a list of things Anne and her friends and family do to entertain themselves since they don't have television. From your list, choose five new things to try, and do one a week for the next five weeks. Then talk about which of those activities were the most fun and which ones you'd like to do again. Make a "suggestion box" so the family can submit ideas for fun things they'd like to do in the future. Once in a while take out a suggestion and do it as a family. Remember, most of Anne's activities don't cost anything, and some involve friends.

Family Reading Time

If you don't already own *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery, check it out of the library and read aloud from the book each night after dinner or at bedtime. Follow Anne through the rest of the books in the series. You'll be glad you did!

—Lissa Halls Johnson

Babe

Rated: G

Themes: Intrinsic value of life, courage, importance of friendship, treating others different from you with respect, the power of love and kindness to change things, the value of individuals who do not have special talents but have love, acceptance, kindness, and innocence

Running Time: 1 hour, 32 minutes

Starring: James Cromwell as Farmer Hoggett, Magda Szubanski as Mrs. Hoggett, and the voice talents of Christine Cavanaugh as Babe, Miriam Margolys as Fly, and Hugo Weaving as Rex

Directed by: Chris Noonan



Cautions

There is some mild language: Babe calls the sheep buttheads; the son-in-law says “for God’s sake.” A duck is killed off camera for the family Christmas dinner. The fact that the meat we eat was once a living animal is made clear when Babe asks if humans eat pigs. The grandchildren are brats, rudely refusing to eat their Christmas dinner and throwing fits when they don’t like the Christmas gifts they receive.



Story Summary

Right away, it’s obvious this pig is different from the others. When his mother is taken away, he mourns for her while his sisters and brothers are more interested in food. Babe is swept out of the barn and taken to a small country fair where Farmer Hoggett correctly guesses Babe’s weight and wins him. The plan from the beginning is to fatten Babe and eat him. Yet although Farmer Hoggett doesn’t know it right away, he senses that Babe is special.

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In the farmyard it's immediately clear that the other animals have prejudices against each other based on the type of animal they are. The dogs believe all sheep and pigs are stupid. The sheep believe all dogs are vicious wolves. Everyone believes something about the other animals that keeps everyone segregated in their own little groups, suspicious and unable to get along. And Ferdinand the duck doesn't want to be who he is—he'd rather be a rooster.

Babe is the only animal without prejudice. He believes the best of all creatures. His heart is large, kind, innocent, and loving. Because it is so, he is taken advantage of by the duck, is loved by the sheep, and eventually changes the lives of everyone he comes in contact with—not because he has super talents in one form or another, but simply because he loves others and is kind to them.

Babe is accepted by the animals until he mistakenly follows the devious duck in an attempt to steal an alarm clock. Babe is only trying to help the duck, not realizing he's being used. As a result, Babe is nearly banished from the barnyard family. He's not allowed to "consort" with the duck anymore.

When he first arrived on the farm, Fly, one of the main sheep-dogs, took Babe into her litter. When it's time for her puppies to leave home, she is sad until Babe asks, "Fly, may I call you Mom?" From that day, Fly takes the little pig even more to heart and becomes his protector and guide.

One day, Babe wanders from the farm and discovers poachers stealing Farmer Hoggett's sheep. He races back to the farm, sounding an alarm that saves the rest of the sheep. As a result of that and another small incident, Farmer Hoggett begins to take Babe with him out to the fields believing Babe might be able to



help him herd the sheep. He discovers he is correct, and Babe does a marvelous job. Babe does not herd the sheep through intimidation but through kindness and speaking gently to them.

Farmer Hoggett continues to train Babe and enters him in a sheep-herding contest—the Grand Nationals. Rex, one of the sheepdogs, is jealous of Babe and attempts to destroy him. The cat tells Babe the only reason he’s alive is so the “bosses” can eat him. Babe asks Fly if this is true, and she says that yes, people do eat pigs—even the bosses. Hearing this, Babe runs away. When Farmer Hoggett finds him, the pig is sick. Rex, having a change of heart toward Babe, tells him to pull himself together—the boss needs him. Babe gets well just in time for the Grand Nationals. When the judges find out Farmer Hoggett’s sheepdog is really a pig, they try to bar them from competing. Finally, Farmer Hoggett convinces the judges to let them compete because the official rule book does not specifically bar other animals from competition. Out on the field, others laugh at Farmer Hoggett and Babe, but they move forward, ignoring the ridicule of the crowd. Despite what everyone else thinks, they stand true, strong, and courageous.



Before You Watch

Discuss where our meat comes from. Talk about what prejudice is.



Bible Bookmarks

Acts 10:34-35; Galatians 5:22; Colossians 3:12; Matthew 22:39; John 15:12



Talking Points

1. What do the animals think about each other? Are they right? Do other kids do, wear, or say something that makes you or others label them as “stupid”? What other labels do kids give each other? Are those labels fair? What does God say about judging others? (See Matthew 7:1; Romans 14:10.)

2. When Fly’s puppies leave home, she is very sad. But Babe asks her if he may call her “Mom” and she agrees. From then on, Fly protects and

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guides Babe. Who protects and guides you? Name some people you want to be like. Why do you want to be like them?

3. After Babe is “warned” that the dogs are really just mean wolves then experiences the kindness of the dog Fly, he says, “I will never think badly of any creature ever again.” But the duck, Ferdinand, is a bad influence, leading Babe to do wrong things. What is the difference between thinking badly of someone (judging them unfairly) and being wise about whom we trust? Should we trust just anyone?

4. What makes Farmer Hoggett different from the other humans in the movie? Than the other animals? (One hint: He sees value in Babe.) How does he treat others (animals and humans) around him? He doesn’t say much, does he? But what is it like when he does talk? Do you believe him more or less than his talkative wife?

5. The cat tells Babe all the other animals are laughing at him. That hurts Babe. When Farmer Hoggett and Babe go to the sheepherding contest, all the people laugh and laugh. Farmer Hoggett and Babe continue anyway. What does it take to do what is right even when people are laughing at you? Can you think of a time when people laughed at you? What did you do?

6. How is this story like *Charlotte’s Web* (if you’ve seen that movie)? How is it different? How is Charlotte like Fly? (Both are encouraging and kind.)



Follow-Up Activities

Noah’s Ark Diorama

Read the story of Noah and the ark (Genesis 6-8) from a children’s Bible or a storybook. If you’ve done the Train Ride activity from *Sarah, Plain & Tall*, have your kids create a diorama of the Noah’s ark story using the box. (If not, follow the instructions to make the box for the diorama.) When illustrating the story, start with the building of the ark, then move to the gathering of the animals, the flood, and finally the resettlement of the earth by Noah’s family and the animals. Ask your kids, “Why do you think God included all the animals? Are all of them important to Him? Why?”

Family Password

The sheep have a secret password for other sheep. Dream up your own

family password or slogan. But keep it a secret. Our family's was "Banana Soup." If someone told us they were supposed to pick us up from school but they didn't know the password, then we were to run into the office and wait there for one of our parents to arrive.

Create a Story

Write your own short story about an animal who does something other people don't think he can do. Or write a story about a child your age who does something people don't think he can do. You can write one story as a whole family, or have everyone write individual stories and read them out loud. Remember to be as kind as Babe when others read their stories.

—*Lissa Halls Johnson*

The Black Stallion

Rated: G

Running Time: 1 hour, 57 minutes

Themes: Courage, perseverance, respect for elders, second chances, family ties, hard work, love for God's creatures, honor

Starring: Kelly Reno as Alec Ramsey, Teri Garr as Alec's mother, Clarence Muse as Snoe, Hoyt Axton as Alec's father, Michael Higgins as Jim Neville, Mickey Rooney as Henry Dailey, and Cass Ole as The Black (the horse)

Based on the book by Walter Farley

Directed by: Carroll Ballard



Cautions

Not long after the film opens on board a ship off the coast of North Africa, a fire breaks out in the middle of the night resulting in the ship's sinking. This scene, quite realistically depicted, captures all the chaos—fights for life vests, people crashing into each other, waves exploding over the side and drenching everyone—that would ensue from such an incident. It may be too intense for younger viewers. Also, a scene on the beach where Alec lands features a near-strike by a cobra, ending with The Black (the horse who also survives the shipwreck and saves Alec) trampling the snake.



Story Summary

When Alec Ramsey finds himself on the desert coast of North Africa, the sole human survivor of a shipwreck, his only companion is a wild Arabian horse, The Black. Fiercely independent, The Black at first will have nothing to do with Alec. But after he saves Alec from a deadly cobra bite, a bond slowly begins to develop between the two.

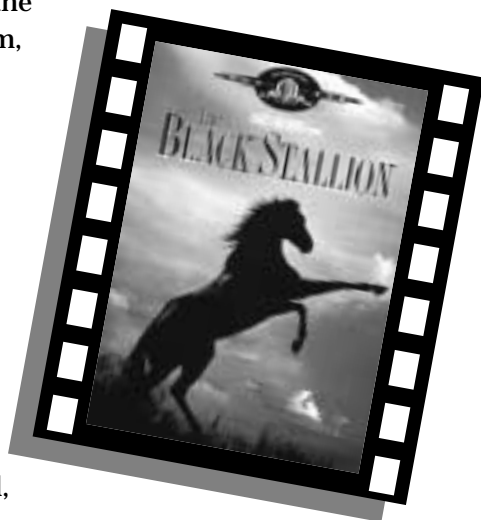
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When unidentified sailors land on the island and take Alec away with them, The Black refuses to let him leave without him.

Together they return to Alec's hometown, but The Black is too high-spirited to be comfortable in Alec's small yard. He runs away, with Alec following, to a farm owned by retired horse trainer Henry Dailey. In his prime, Henry was a top trainer, and, although he's given all that up, he recognizes that The Black is born to run. He knows the horse is fast, but he thinks there are too many obstacles to overcome for him ever to be a true racehorse. The main one is that he has no pedigree papers. But Henry agrees to train him and, at the same time, teach Alec to ride. Thus begins a grueling process to turn a wild horse and raw young rider into championship caliber. Eventually, Henry comes to believe The Black may indeed be a very special horse.

Henry decides to take a chance. He calls up an old acquaintance, Jim Neville, the most famous reporter covering the world of horse racing. Neville comes out to the track one stormy night, and The Black shows his stuff during a drenching downpour. The next morning Neville announces to the racing world that a head-to-head race featuring the two fastest horses on the planet will now include a third, The Black. Alec's mom reads the story in the paper about a mystery horse that will be in the race, and Alec mumbles that it's The Black and he's going to ride him. Just then the doorbell rings and Henry shows up.

Alec's mom is very upset when she learns the plan; she's already lost her husband in the shipwreck that Alec escaped, and her son is all she has left. She can't possibly let Alec ride The Black. Then Alec pulls out a little statue of Bucephalus, Alexander the Great's horse, given to him by his dad the night of the shipwreck. His dad told him how Alexander's dad had given him that great and noble steed, and how it had been a turning



point in his career. When Alec's mom hears the story, she hears in Alec's voice the love her husband had for their son as well as the love and dear memories Alec has for his dad. Putting aside her fears, she thinks about what this could mean to Alec and she relents.

The day of the race dawns clear and bright. The Black, of course, has never run against other horses. How will he react? Will he run his best? As the horses approach the starting gate, one of them rears, and his hoof comes down on The Black's leg, opening a gash from which blood freely flows. Bleeding, spooked, and untried, The Black gets a horrible start, immediately falling behind by a couple hundred yards—an impossible distance to make up. Or is it? Running like the wind, The Black slowly closes the gap. Rounding the final turn, urged on by Alec, The Black



makes a final charge, just nipping the lead horse for the victory.

Before You Watch

Your family might enjoy this movie even more if you have first read together the famous novel by Walter Farley. Your family might also enjoy



finding out more about the history of horses, Arabian horses in particular.

Bible Bookmarks



1 John 4:18; 2 Timothy 4:7; Acts 20:24; Hebrews 12:1

Talking Points

1. How does Alec win The Black's trust? What does Alec gain from his relationship with The Black? How does the closeness of their relationship help both horse and boy when the strangers come to the island? Our God is a loving God who gives His children gifts (James 1:17). What good gifts have you received? Have you used them well?

2. Recognizing Henry's greatness as a trainer, Alec puts himself and the horse entirely in his hands and embarks on a rigorous course of training so that he can get the most out of himself and his horse. In the Bible, being a believer is often likened to a race. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-25. What is the strict training Christians go into? What is the prize at the

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end of the race?

3. When Alec's mother first hears about the plans to race The Black against the top two horses in the world, she is horrified. What does Alec do when his mother initially reacts negatively to his riding The Black in the race? What does the Bible say about honoring parents? (See Exodus 20:12.)

4. After Alec's mother gets over the shock of hearing for the first time that Alec plans to ride The Black in a professional horse race, she goes up to her son's room to ask him a few questions. Alec pulls out the little statue of Bucephalus. He tells his mom that when his dad gave it to him, he told him about how Alexander the Great's father first gave him that great horse. Listening closely, his mom hears something in Alec's voice. What is it? How does it help her overcome her fears? (See 1 John 4:18.)



Follow-Up Activities

Family Trip to the Stables

If you live in the city or the suburbs, you may not be near “horse property.” However, many towns, and especially those in more rural areas, have stables where horses can be boarded and ridden. Many are open to the public. Some occasionally put on shows. Why not plan a Saturday trip to one of these stables? If you live in the West or vacation out West, there are special places, called dude ranches, where you can spend days or weeks learning about and riding horses.

Horse Show

Horses are trained to do many other activities besides racing. Many horse shows feature dressage, jumping, and other events. Another kind of show is called a rodeo. Events featuring horses include cutting, in which a horse separates a calf from a herd and forces it to go exactly where it's supposed to; riding unbroken horses called broncs; calf roping; and barrel racing. All these events relate to essential activities on cattle ranches, so you can get a feel for what life on a ranch is like by going to a rodeo. Check your newspaper for announcements about rodeos or horse shows in your area, and take the family to one of these fun events.



Just for Fun

THE BLACK STALLION

The horse has been domesticated for thousands of years. Horses are even mentioned in the Bible (Psalm 20:7, 147:10; Proverbs 26:3). Until about a hundred years ago, horses provided people with their main means of transportation. There are still some people, called the Amish, who live mainly in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, who have decided they want to live their lives free of internal combustion engines, such as cars have, and other modern conveniences. If you go to their towns and settlements, you will see them riding in horse-drawn buggies and carriages. Some of the Amish make furniture or engage in other cottage industries and sell their wares in stores near where they live.

—*Jan P. Dennis*

About the Writers

Brandy Bruce holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Liberty University, where she currently works in the College of General Studies. She resides in Lynchburg, Virginia, with her husband, Jeff, and their cat, Georgia.

Jan P. Dennis is the president of The Jan P. Dennis Literary Agency. With over 25 years of publishing experience, he has worked with Stephen R. Lawhead, Frank Peretti, T. Davis Bunn, Francis Schaeffer, Charles Colson, Max Lucado, Bodie Thoene, Ravi Zacharias, and many other prominent authors. Most recently he has helped establish the career of Ted Dekker.

John Duckworth is a senior book producer at Focus on the Family. The author of several books, he is also the father of twin boys who watch entirely too many motion pictures.

John Fornof writes and directs for *Adventures in Odyssey*, a family radio drama heard on over 700 stations. He's producer for the new *Last Chance Detectives* radio series. John was also the writer, voice director, and associate producer for *Ribbits!*—an award-winning computer-animated program produced by Focus on the Family.

Lissa Halls Johnson is a book producer, writer, and fiction acquisitions editor for Focus on the Family. She is the creator and editor of the “Brio Girls” book series. She has written 16 novels for teenagers and young readers.

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