

Film first before book

Literature



Film First Before Book A book is always more complete and accurate, since the is more at liberty to include even the smallest detail possible. Based on personal experience, a film is hard to appreciate when one was able to read the book first, unless the viewer is more into the cinematic aspect of the story (Walter 140). Anyone who has read the book and seen the movie “ Harry Potter” would be able to attest that there are parts of the book that were not included in the film anymore. This can easily be defended though, because a film or movie lasts only up to 2 hours, while a book can be of any number of pages. This comparison between a book and a film is applicable to the film “ Cabeza de Vaca” and the book “ Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition” (Walter 140). “ Cabeza de Vaca” is a film regarding an epic subject Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca. For those who already know the history of this Spanish explorer, this film is effective in parts where it portrays a detached observation of people and events. However, there is obvious confusion regarding place, time, and script continuity. For example, the Pacific coast of Mexico seems to be so near Texas, and there are mountains on what is supposed to be the coast of Florida. Compared to the book, it is much less educational of specific events and times. For example, throughout the entire film, de Vaca remains a mysterious and cold figure because it was unable to portray his state of mind besides showing de Vaca’s dreams in a typically movie fashion (Stavans, Augenbraum, and Norton 312). The text “ Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition”, on the other hand, explicitly details his life experiences in the foreign place, and even though some critics say that the famous European ethnocentrism can be traced in de Vaca’s writing, he is able to relay to the readers the important details of the expedition. Through his writings, the readers are exposed to the expedition’s purpose of gaining

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power, to its failure, to de Vaca's survival, to his alternate motives for discovering the place. De Vaca's writing style makes one view the voyage as an anthropological research, giving detailed information as much as possible (Stavans, et al 312). The film also failed to highlight the slight slips of personal contradicting insights that are injected in de Vaca's writings. This could have been a good way to give the character a complex personality that could have made him more compelling than tedious. For example, in his text, de Vaca objectively talks about a custom of the Native American: " they bury the dead except those who are medicine men" (Nu? n? ez 38). Then a few pages after, de Vaca notes " they drive the diseases away with their breath and their hands and we laughed and took it as a joke" (Nu? n? ez 40). This could have been a good way to emphasize how the Spanish explorer is torn between being critical and amazed by the new world he sees. Although there are parts of the film that tried to capture the greatness of this anti-imperialistic epic and the wonder and terror that the Spanish explorers experienced in this new land, one could still feel it lacking in narrative and adequate information. This may not hold true to every film or movie made because great editing skills could have produced a more educational plot, but one has to understand that films are produced mainly for entertainment purposes and being informative comes only second to this purpose.

Watching the film can make a viewer interested in the details of this piece of history, and encourage the individual to read the book. However, reading the text prior to viewing the film can make one more critical of huge gaps in the story. Since no two-hour film can capture the great details a book can give, it is always a good decision to watch the film first before reading the book.

Works Cited Echeverria, Nichola, and Cabeza V. A. Nu? n? ez. Cabeza De
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