

From page to film: 'the martian' media comparison



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The fantasy, science-fiction movie *The Martian* is based on the the fascinating novel *The Martian* by Andy Weir. The movie was directed by Ridley Scott, and was released in 2015. The story is about an astronaut (Mark Watney) who is left behind by the other astronauts on Mars when they abort their mission and are going back to Earth due to a storm, since he was presumed dead. Both the novel and the movie are pretty good and effective in developing the plot, theme, and characters. However, an important question to ask is whether the book or the movie is a better vehicle for telling the story. The novel and the movie are each good in developing certain things in the story in different ways, for instance, the novel had better character development, both of them did a somewhat good job in developing the plot, (even though the book had a bit better plot development), and lastly, different themes were developed differently by each of them. This is important because it shows how both the novel and the movie have different ways of showing theme, plot, and character development in the story, although, when deeply analyzed, the book is overall a better vehicle to tell the story (in this case and, arguably, in most cases).

One of the main developments that was addressed adeptly in both the novel and the movie was the plot. While both the film and page versions feature engaging action, the movie left out a lot of details from the book that weren't insignificant, or they changed them to make the movie more interesting. That is understandable because movies can't include all details from the books, in order to have the best results. For example, at the end of the movie, Commander Lewis went to take Watney back to *Hermes*, because

their speed was too high for Watney's Floating spaceship, when originally, it was Beck who did that in the book. Additionally, in the book, Watney says that he wants to poke a hole in his EVA suit, to use the escaping air as a thruster and "fly around like Iron Man" (Weir 353). However, this was taken as a joke in the book, but in the movie, he actually did that to reach commander Lewis in space, which was quite unrealistic even though that was done to make the movie more thrilling and interesting. Another example would be Mark's fifty-day long trip to the Schiaparelli Crater, which was really safe and without any problems in the movie, however, that's about the opposite of the way it is in the novel. Moreover, Mark flips the rover on his way down the crater, faces a dead end which causes problems since he needs to avoid a storm, and many more problems which were not included in the movie. Although, having said all these, it is important to remember that some of the events were much easier to show and develop in the movie, such as the vast nothingness and void in space, through sounds, visuals, music, etc. Thus, the novel overall has a better way of developing the plot, since the events that occur in the story make more sense to the audience because of the details provided.

The second important thing, is theme development, which was developed differently by each of the novel and the movie, since they both developed certain themes in different ways better or worse than each other. For instance, the theme of isolation was shown and developed well in both the movie and the novel. However, in the movie, the theme is shown better since a theme like that is communicated better through pictures and visuals. So, when you see the vast amount of emptiness in space, the feeling of

Loneliness is transferred better and the audience will understand it better when they see the big void, or how Mark Watney can easily die, get stuck on Mars, or just float off into the void with one small mistake. Other themes such as perseverance, sacrifice, and friendship can be communicated better through the novel. That's because more details are provided in the book, and that causes the audience to see the characters' relationships with each other, their thoughts, and their motives for what they do. Other themes such as science or man against nature are explained well in different ways in both the novel and the book. The book provides formulas and specific explanations. For example, in the book Mark explains how he's going to create water, "If I run the hydrazine over an iridium catalyst, it'll separate into N₂ and H₂" (Weir 24). However, in the movie, lots of the explanatory procedures are communicated to the audience through visuals, as they see him "take hydrogen, add oxygen, and burn [them]" (Scott, 2015, Scott Free Productions). Therefore, both the novel and movie developed the themes in the story well, but using different methods.

The last but not least important development, is the development of characters in the story. The character development in the novel, is much better than the character development in the movie. That is because of how the book has much more dialogue and details, or even sometimes the readers get to know what the characters are thinking. As a result, the readers get to know the characters pretty well, and notice their development. An example would be how in the book, the audience finds out that the Ares 3 crew have "picked [Beth Johansson] to be the survivor... So, [she] won't die even if everything goes wrong" (Weir 252). The information is

given to the readers through Johansson's conversation with her father, in which the audience finds out many things about her family, her way of thinking, personality, the group's plans, etc. However, in the movie, parts like this have been eliminated to prevent the movie from getting long and boring. Moreover, in the movie, the audience don't get much chance or information to get to know a lot of the characters, so then they can have opinions about them or notice their development. That's the case for characters like Mindy Park or Beck. However, in the book more details are provided and therefore the readers can connect and understand them more. Because of the same reason, there are some other changes in the movie, too. For instance, at the end of the movie, since the actor playing Commander Lewis' character is more well known and more important in the story, they changed the story so then in the end, she jumps out of Hermes (their spaceship) to go and grab Watney, even though in the book it was actually Beck who did that. So, the book and the movie both did a great job of developing the characters in the story.

The novel and the movie *The Martian* both proved effective in developing the themes, plot, and characters in the essential story. Movies and books have different ways of communicating different things to the audience, as movies communicate through visuals, sound, music, etc. and books communicate through words, the author's writing style, and so on. However, in general, the books are usually better than the movies in communicating with the audience, since they provide more details, and other things that help them understand the story better. *The Martian* movie was really good compared to the other movies that are based on books, since the directors were able to

professionally make the novel into a movie. However, since movies can't give the audience as much information in a couple of hours as books do in several hundred pages, they end up leaving interesting details from the story. That's why the Martian book, and books in general are overall better vehicles to tell the story. Though, it is important not to forget that sometimes books cannot communicate certain messages as well as the movies do, since pictures and music are really important and influential too. An example of that in this case would be how the themes " isolation" or " man against nature" were better developed in the movie. Thus, < > novel is a better vehicle to tell the story than the movie by a slight difference.