

# Comparison of the novel by robert penn warren and the film adaptation

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



s All the Kings Men: Book vs. Movie “ All the King’s Men” was a breakthrough in Robert Penn Warren’s literary career that helped him establish his niche as a talented writer. The novel was not only commended for its powerful and gripping storyline, but it also shed interesting light on human behavior and the pathology of power. The book’s brilliance attracted the attention of filmmakers and was made twice for the silver-screen; once in 1949 and then in 2006. Although, the main premise of both movies was the same but compared to the 1949 adaptation, the 2006 version was far more faithful to the book with only slight deviations from the author’s depiction of events. However, the substance of the prose will highlight how successful was the screenplay in projecting the character’s emotion and their conflicts.

One of the turning points in the entire story was how the relationship between Judge Irwin and Jack Burden was affected by the on-going power struggle of Willie Stark. Jack’s character is torn between the man, who had always been a father figure to him throughout his life and the man, who was everything he had wanted to be. In the book, Jack confronts Judge Irwin about the only scandal in his otherwise sterling career and personal life. The Judge admits to his sin as Jack openly blackmails him. The judge seems resolute and does not give in to his blackmail and later on Jack discovers through his mother that not only did Judge Irwin commit suicide, but he was also his biological father. (Warren, 2002)

The book clearly elaborates upon the irony of their conflict, as the Judge bequeathed him the same dirty money that Jack was blackmailing him over. The conflict between Judge Irwin and Jack is depicted in a completely

different light in the 1949 adaptation; as Judge Irwin's character was replaced by Judge Stanton and the dramatic discovery of Jack's paternity was completely omitted. The 2006 version did include this part and besides the dramatic finding, the movie shows a compelling exchange between the two characters; Judge Irwin hints at a dark secret but doesn't reveal it that prepares the audience for what is to come and emboldens the element of suspense in the novel. (Zaillian, 2006)

The movie depiction of this scenario somehow makes more sense than the book's description. It wasn't any flaw on part of the author but the actors and their respective involvement in their roles successfully projected the intensity of the emotion and the conflict they were embroiled in. The climax of the story is reached with Stark's assassination at the hands of Adam Stanton. Though its depiction remains the same in the film and the novel, the film ends with newspaper headlines that show the fate of the remaining characters. Whereas, the book delves deep into the lives of the characters from the perspective of the story's narrator, Jack Burden. It is true that the book provides a descriptive account of the closure achieved by all the characters, but a movie has a timing restriction that filmmakers need to abide by.

Unlike the novel, the movie simply ends highlighting where all the remaining characters ended up with Stark out of the picture, without going into much detail. Despite the fact that the end was quite dissimilar to that of the book, it somehow managed to have a greater dramatic impact than that in the novel. The film maintained the element of drama in a coherent manner and further upheld its visual appeal by providing an immediate closure after

Stark's death. Delving too much in the lives of the people after such a conclusive and dramatic point would only make the film a drag resulting in a failure to grab the viewer's attention. A novel is an entirely different medium than a film, but the film adaptation had a much powerful impact than the book.

#### Works Cited

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