

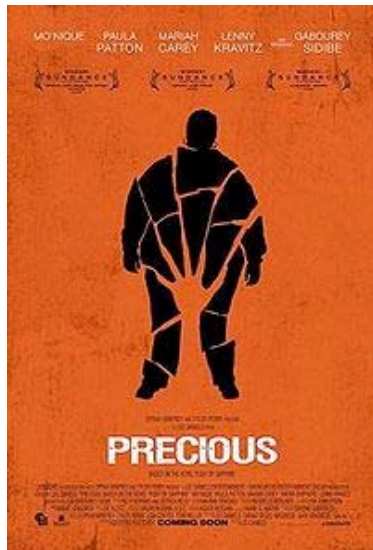


Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: The Reign of the Independents

Precious : Based on the Novel *Push* by Sapphire

"I'm gonna break through or somebody gonna break through to me." - *Precious*



Director:

Lee Daniels

Producers:

Lee Daniels
Oprah Winfrey
Tom Heller
Tyler Perry

Writer:

Geoffrey S. Fletcher
Sapphire (book)

Starring:

Gabourey Sidibe
Mo'Nique
Paula Patton
Mariah Carey
Lenny Kravitz

Music:

Mario Grigorov

Cinematography:

Andrew Dunn
Darren Lew

Editing:

Joe Klotz

Distributor:

Lionsgate

Release date:

November 6, 2009

Running time:

110 minutes

Budget:

\$10,000,000

Box Office gross:

\$60,578,151 (Worldwide)

Right from its opening scene, *Precious* establishes a defining element of the film: the difference between the fantasy world of the lead character, sixteen year-old Claireece 'Precious' Jones, and the crushing grimness of the reality she is trapped within. As the story progresses, swiftly immersing the viewer into a life defined by illiteracy, obesity, poverty, abuse and incest, the overwhelming brutality of her daily existence is rendered so vividly that it almost seems surreal.

In response to this seemingly unrelenting cycle, her commonplace, yet apparently unreachable, hopes - to have a handsome boyfriend, be liked by her teacher, or to be famous - appear to be the only way to escape from inside this oppressive nightmare. For both Precious and the audience, they are grounding moments to cling on to when it all gets too much.

After these early scenes, we slowly see a different reality and new, achievable dreams - based in a supportive community and personal education - emerge for Precious. As portrayed by newcomer Gabourey Sidibe, what first appeared to be a nearly mute, lost victim transforms into a vibrant, capable, and independent individual. The fantasy elements are no longer needed, because her real life - while still filled with many daunting challenges - is now at least hers to live, rather than something to escape from.

Geoffrey Fletcher's Oscar-winning screenplay adaption brilliantly captures the authentic voice of the 1996 novel while also addressing the wider social neglect of the urban poor, with *Precious* following in the lineage of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* as an African-American whose problems society chooses not to see. But the life-affirming quality of the story comes from witnessing this young girl breaking through and finding a purpose when all she had been taught previously was to feel worthless.

Did you know?

- Helen Mirren was originally cast as Mrs. Weiss. Mariah Carey replaced her just two days before production began.
- The film features over 300 digital effects, mainly used to recreate the authentic look of Harlem circa 1980 by adding in graffiti and other period details.
- Lee Daniels is the first African-American director to earn a Best Picture nomination. Geoffrey Fletcher is the first to win a screenplay Academy Award.



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"Some folks has a lot of things around them that shines for other peoples. I think that maybe some of them was in tunnels. And in that tunnel, the only light they had was inside of them. And then long after they escape that tunnel, they still be shining for everybody else." - Precious

Things to Explore

- In what ways is the film an indictment of modern society? Do you think the problems of the 1980's the film depicts are better or worse today?
- What is the intention behind the many fantasy sequences in the film? How do they help us understand the mind of Precious?
- How do Precious' own prejudices against certain types of people change as the film progresses? What do these changes reflect about her character?
- Can the behavior of Precious' mother ever be justified? How does she justify it?
- The male nurse character in the film is not in the original book. Why do you think this character was added to the film?
- What are the significance of the repeated shots of food and television throughout the film?
- How does the film emphasize the role of community and education in breaking through cycles of abuse and neglect?
- What do you think is the significance of the orange scarf?
- What do you think of the ending? Are you optimistic for the future of Precious?

Themes

- Poverty
- Dysfunctional families
- Abuse
- Redemption through education
- Failings of the welfare system
- Self-image
- Resilience
- Independence



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"There's always something wrong with these tests. These tests paint a picture of me with no brain. These tests paint a picture of me and my mother, my whole family as less than dumb. Just ugly black grease, need to be wiped away, find a job for." - Precious

Library Resources

1) Invisible Man, Ralph Ellison

Ellison's classic novel is in many ways a predecessor to Sapphire's novel and the film, detailing a nameless African-American growing up in the South and becoming increasingly radicalized by his encounters with a neglectful society.

Copy	Material	Location
FICTION ELLISON,R.	Book	Fiction

2) Push : A Novel, Sapphire

The 1996 novel is told entirely from the point of view of Precious, vividly describing her harsh youth in 1980s Harlem in a language that matches the characters own personal growth.

Copy	Material	Location
FICTION SAPPHERE	Book	Fiction

3) Precious [videorecording (DVD)]

The DVD includes special features on the adapting the book into a film, the role of producer Oprah Winfrey and Tyler Perry in bringing the film to fruition, and an audio commentary from director Lee Daniels.

Copy	Material	Location
DVD PRE	DVD Fiction	Audio Visual

Online Resources

<http://www.weareallprecious.com/>

The official website for the film features additional video and photos along with a lively message board where viewers from around the world have shared their thoughts of the film.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YGO7j3Y-cM>

A video interview with *Precious* stars Mo'Nique, Gabourey Sidibe, Paula Patton, novelist Sapphire and executive producers Oprah Winfrey and Tyler Perry.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=5426263n>

Push author Sapphire describes how her novel was transformed into the successful film, despite her initial skepticism about the project.

http://www.kcrw.com/etc/programs/tt/tt100217geoffrey_fletcher

A podcast interview with Geoffrey Fletcher, the Oscar-winning *Precious* screenwriter, in which he goes into depth about his adaptation of the novel.



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Precious : Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire

"You sit there and you judge me, and you write them notes on your notepad, because you think you know who I am!" - Mary

IF YOU LIKED PRECIOUS...

Hounddog

(Deborah Kampmeier/102 mins/R/2007)

--Lewellen (Dakota Fanning) is a troubled young girl growing up in Alabama in the 1950s. Deborah Kampmeier's controversial film is about childhood trauma and repression as Lewellen finds solace in the music of Elvis Presely and begins to move beyond her pain and anger toward a more hopeful future.

Crash

(Paul Haggis/112 mins/R/2007)

--Paul Haggis' Academy Award winning (Best Picture, Best Original Screenplay) directorial debut contains an outstanding ensemble cast that explores issues of race and gender in Los Angeles. Featuring Sandra Bullock, Matt Dillion, Ryan Phillippe, Don Cheadle, and Terrence Howard.

Stevie

(Steve James/145 min/R/2002)

--From the director of *Hoop Dreams*, *Stevie* is a fascinating and difficult look at life gone tragically wrong. Filmmaker Steve James reconnects with Stephen Dale Fielding, who James mentored through the Big Brother program when Fielding was 11 years old. Years later, James discovers the realities of Stevie's adult life and wonders what he could have done to help make a different outcome.

Monsters Ball

(Marc Foster/111 min/R/2001)

--Halle Berry won an Academy Award for her role in this Lee Daniels production. Hank Grotkowski (Billy Bob Thornton) is a hard-drinking racist ex-cop working as a prison guard in Georgia. When his son (Heath Ledger) commits suicide, Hank falls into deep depression but his life is inexorably changed when he helps an African-American woman Leticia (Halle Berry) whose son has been hit by a car.

War Zone

(Tim Roth/98 min/NR/1999)

--Tim Roth's directorial debut is a harrowing look at a family in crisis. Tom (Freddie Cunliffe) is a 15 year-old-boy whose isolation is deepened when his family moves from London to the rural Devon countryside. When he encounters his father (Ray Winstone) and his 18-year-old sister Jessie (Lara Belmont) in an intimate, sexual embrace, he's forced to confront his angry, violent father.

Also by Lee Daniels:

As Director: *Shadowboxer* (93 min/R/2005)

As Producer: *The Woodsman* (87 min/R/2004)

***Tennessee* (99 min/R/2009)**