



GREAT FILMS THAT WILL SWEEP TEENS AWAY

"You know what your problem is, it's that you haven't seen enough movies— all of life's riddles are answered in the movies." - **Steve Martin, actor**

"You can map your life through your favorite movies, and no two people's maps will be the same." - **Mary Schmich, Pulitzer-Prize winning columnist**

Ah yes, summer flicks. Blockbusters, escape movies, mainstream fare . . . not the time for tense drama. But wait. Who said that summer movie watching must be laid back?

In a break with tradition, WKCD has put together a list of films—especially for youth 13 or 14 and up—that you won't find at your local theater, but that will have you leaning forward, maybe swallowing hard. From the countless films we could have chosen, we picked 17. In the true-life drama *Apollo 13*, Tom Hanks (playing the astronaut Jim Lovell) brings his doomed NASA spacecraft safely back to earth, escaping probable death. Leonardo di Caprio enters the dreams of others in the film *Inception*. There's the horrifying genocide of *Hotel Rwanda* and the brash lights of *Slum Dog Millionaire*. In the Australian film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, two aboriginal girls escape from the government institution where they are being held and trained as servants and travel 1,500 by foot, across the desert, back to their home.

All of these videos are available through Blockbuster or Netflix. Several are R-rated, but appear on other lists of movies appropriate for older teens, so we included them here, too. While many of these films didn't make it big in Hollywood, we are confident they will sweep teens—really, everyone—off their feet.

REAL LIFE ADVENTURE DRAMA

Apollo 13 (1995, PG)

"Houston, we have a problem." Those words were immortalized during the tense days of the Apollo 13 lunar mission crisis in 1970, events recreated in this epic historical drama from Ron Howard. Astronaut Jim Lovell (Tom Hanks) leads command module pilot Jack Swigert (Kevin Bacon) and lunar module driver Fred Haise (Bill Paxton) on what is slated as NASA's third lunar landing mission. All goes smoothly until the craft is halfway through its mission, when an exploding oxygen tank threatens the crew's oxygen and power supplies. As the courageous astronauts face the dilemma of either suffocating or freezing to death, Mission Control struggles to find a way to bring the crew back home, all the while knowing that the spacemen face probable death once the battered ship reenters the Earth's atmosphere. This movie will keep you on the edge of your seat.

Touching the Void (2004, NR)

TOUCHING THE VOID tells the true story of two young climbers who set out to be the first ever to climb the west face of the 21,000-foot Siula Grande in the Andes. They make it to the top, but on the way down Simpson falls and shatters his leg. Yates risks his own life to help Simpson descend, lowering him 150 feet at a time with a rope holding them together. But when Simpson falls again and Yates can't see or hear him, the rope that connected them was pulling Yates to certain death. Yates, believing Simpson must be dead, cuts the rope. He searches for Simpson with no luck and barely makes it back to base camp. Meanwhile, over the next four days Simpson faces certain death but refuses to give up. Simpson fell into a 150-foot crevasse. By going down further into the crevasse instead of trying to climb out of it, he manages to escape. Facing a series of obstacles that would challenge a mythological hero, Simpson perseveres. Even when he accepts that death was inevitable, he still kept going because "I didn't want to die alone." He keeps trying anything and everything he could think of to get back home.

FOREIGN TALES

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2003, PG-13)

Martial arts wizard Yu Shu Lien runs a company that provides secure transport for shipments of goods to be sold. She is visited by Li Mu Bai who has come to give his famous sword to Sir Te, a mutual friend, for safekeeping. Li has been a warrior-hero, using the Green Destiny sword to fight for justice. He is tired of killing and wants to retire to a life of meditation, but he has one unfinished obligation: to avenge the death of his master at the hands of a villain named Jade Fox. Something else also pulls him back: his love, never expressed, for Yu. At the home of Sir Te, Yu meets

another guest, the pampered daughter of a governor named Jen Yu. Jen and Yu each dream of freedom. That night, the sword is stolen. Yu races after the masked thief to get it back. The thief has ties to Jade Fox. And Jen, soon to enter into an arranged marriage, has a secret love, the leader of a pack of desert bandits. This martial arts spectacular by Ang Lee features special effects and action sequences that will take your breath away.

Slum Dog Millionaire (2008, R)

In SLUM DOG MILLIONAIRE, Jamal (Dev Patel) is an 18-year-old tea service worker for a telecommunications company who has somehow managed to make it to the second-to-last question on the Indian version of Who Wants to be a Millionaire? He's dragged in for questioning by the police, who want to know how he's cheating—which, in their eyes, is the only way an uneducated boy from the slums like him could possibly be winning. Beaten but unbowed, Jamal tells his interrogators stories from his life that explain why he knows the answers: how as young boys, Jamal and his older brother, Salim, lived in squalor, lost their mother in a mob attack on Muslims, and relied on their own wits to survive. He also talks about the long-lost love of his life, Latika, who he's trying to get in touch with and save through the unlikely mechanism of being on the show. As Jamal sits down to find out whether he will be rich beyond his wildest dreams, 60 million viewers remain transfixed to their televisions eager to see if he'll correctly answer the final question. This award-winning film is both gritty (best for older youth) and uplifting. It's also a great introduction to India's "Bollywood" film industry.

MASSACRE AND REDEMPTION

Hotel Rwanda (2004, PG-13)

HOTEL RWANDA tackles one of the most ugly events in recent history, when the Hutu extremists of Rwanda initiated a terrifying campaign of genocide, massacring hundreds of thousands of minority Tutsis, while the rest of the world looked on and did nothing. Paul Rusesabagina, a Hutu, manages the fancy Les Milles Collines hotel in Kigali and has become a very successful businessman with powerful connections in all strata of Rwandan life. His wife is a Tutsi. She urges Paul to use his influence to help local Tutsis, who are being harassed and beaten with increasing frequency, but Paul will only use the political capital he's built up to help his own family, if and when they need it. Soon enough, the violence escalates, and the Hutus begin their genocide of the Tutsis. European guests and staff at the hotel are flown out of the country, and Paul is left in charge. He finds that his conscience won't allow him to watch as the innocent are slaughtered, and before long, he allows the hotel to become a refugee camp. Paul is seen as a traitor by some, putting his life in danger, and the predicament of his "guests" grows more precarious every day. In the words of one reviewer, "Anytime you think you have problems, watch this movie and you will realize how much there is to be grateful for."

Shawshank Redemption (1994, R)

This film is based on a book with the same name by Stephen King. In 1946, a banker named Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) is convicted of a double murder, even though he stubbornly proclaims his innocence. He's sentenced to a life term at the Shawshank State Prison in Maine, where another lifer, Ellis "Red" Redding (Morgan Freeman), picks him as the new recruit most likely to crack under the pressure. The ugly realities of prison life are quickly introduced to Andy: a corrupt warden, sadistic guards, and inmates who are little better than animals, willing to use rape or beatings to insure their dominance. But Andy does not crack: he has the hope of the truly innocent, which (together with his smarts) allow him to prevail behind bars. He uses his banking skills to win favor with the warden and the guards, doing the books for Norton's illegal business schemes and keeping an eye on the investments of most of the prison staff. In exchange, he is able to improve the prison library and bring some dignity and respect back to many of the inmates, including Red. SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION is powerful, thought-provoking, and finally irresistibly uplifting.

MIND BENDERS

The Bourne Ultimatum (2007, PG-13)

In THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM —the very smart third film in the Bourne series—super-spy-assassin Jason Bourne (Matt Damon) finally gets some answers. Bourne seeks not only his identity, but also the individuals responsible for both his loss of memory and extraordinary killing skills. His search leads him from Torino to Paris, London to Tangier, and then on to Manhattan, each city yielding a piece of Bourne's puzzle. His hunters this time include the CIA's Deputy Director and others behind the scenes, who use all manner of astounding surveillance technology as well as "assets," or killers trained like Bourne. No longer a brutal instrument of the government, eliminating "targets" for unknown reasons, Bourne now becomes a moral center, a remarkably resilient one at that. Again and again, he rises from crashes and fights, like the Terminator, ever in motion, resolved to find his secret-agency "maker." If you haven't seen this film already, do!

Inception (2010, PG-13)

Visionary filmmaker Christopher Nolan (*Memento*, *The Dark Knight*) writes and directs this psychological sci-fi action film about a thief who possesses the power to enter into the dreams of others. Dom Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio)

doesn't steal things, he steals ideas. By projecting himself deep into the subconscious of his targets, he can glean information that even the best computer hackers can't get to. In the world of corporate espionage, Cobb is the ultimate weapon. But even weapons have their weakness, and when Cobb loses everything, he's forced to embark on one final mission in a desperate quest for redemption. This time, Cobb won't be harvesting an idea, but sowing one. Should he and his team of specialists succeed, they will have discovered a new frontier in the art of psychic espionage. They've planned everything to perfection, and they have all the tools to get the job done. Their mission is complicated, however, by the sudden appearance of a malevolent foe that seems to know exactly what they're up to, and precisely how to stop them. This film will exhaust your brain as you try to figure it out. *(Note: Wikipedia offers a great roadmap of the film without giving away the suspense.)*

EPIC JOURNEYS

El Norte (1983)

EL NORTE is a realistic picture of both the Guatemalan government's oppression of the Quiche Indians and the hard life of illegal immigrants in the United States. After the Guatemalan army destroys their village of San Pedro, two teenage Quiche Mayan Indian siblings journey north (hence El Norte) through Mexico to the United States to start a new life. The film opens with the destruction of the village and the peasants' pointless appeals to the authorities for justice. Realizing that the government is seizing their land, Enrique and Rosa make the difficult decision to leave their people behind. As they journey through Mexico, the siblings encounter a number of helpful individuals who direct them towards the U.S./Mexican border. There they find a "coyote" (a professional human smuggler) and make the frightening run across border. Once across, Enrique and Rosa confront the impossible realities of life as an illegal immigrant in Los Angeles. Living in constant fear of deportation, they struggle to survive. Eventually, their luck takes a turn for the better when the manager of their motel offers Enrique a job. This is an incredibly moving film.

Rabbit-Proof Fence (2002, PG)

Set in 1931, RABBIT-PROOF FENCE brings to the screen the horrific consequences of a British policy that removed Australian children who were of mixed white/Aboriginal background from their homes (a practice that continued until the 1970s). In this true story, Molly Craig, her sister Daisy, and their cousin Gracie (are all "half castes," what the British call children of mixed-race couples. Their British fathers have long since left, and their homes are with their mothers in Western Australia. British officials, wanting to improve the upbringing of all half-castes, forcibly take the children to an internment camp where they are to be trained as domestic workers and integrated into society. Gracie and Daisy cling to Molly for support, and Molly decides they need to return to their parents. Molly plans a daring escape, and the three girls begin an epic journey back to Western Australia, traveling 1,500 miles on foot with no food or water, and navigating by following the fence that has been build across the nation to stem an over-population of rabbits. This unusual film makes a remarkable adventure-drama as well as a strong social statement.

FINDING IDENTITY

Raising Victor Vargus (2002, R)

Victor is an awkward teenager living on Manhattan's Lower East Side, has an afternoon rendezvous with a girl known as "Fat Donna." When his sister, Vicki, finds out about it, she spreads word throughout the neighborhood, severely damaging what Victor thinks is his reputation. Then he and his best friend, Harold visit the public pool, where Victor spots the lovely Judy, known locally as "Juicy Judy," and he decides to salvage his good name by pursuing her. While Judy is standoffish, Harold has better luck with her friend, Melonie. Judy's shy younger brother, Carlos agrees to help Victor get close to Judy if Victor will introduce him to Vicki. As Victor clumsily, but doggedly pursues her, Judy decides to let Victor think he's her boyfriend, in the hope that his presence will discourage neighborhood boys from harassing her all the time. Victor's strict grandmother is furious when she learns that Victor introduced Vicki to a boy, and she also worries about his influence on his goody-two-shoes younger brother, Nino.

Real Women Have Curves (2002, PG-13)

In this independent drama, Ana is a bright and ambitious 18-year-old Latina who has just graduated from high school in East Los Angeles. Ana wants to broaden her horizons and go on to college, but her mother Carmen has other ideas. Ana's older sister Estela oversees the family business, a dress factory, and Carmen has decided that Ana should put higher education on hold and go to work as a seamstress. When Estela loses four employees in a week, Ana reluctantly agrees to take a job at the factory to help her out, while she applies for college scholarships without her mother's knowledge. Ana's job at the dress factory proves to be a real eye opener; she gains a new respect for Estela's business skills, but is also appalled by the low wages and unpleasant working conditions that are part of the garment industry. While Ana is not unattractive, she carries more than a few extra pounds, a subject her mother mentions at every available opportunity. As Ana encourages her co-workers at the shop to stand up for themselves and gain a greater perspective of their own worth, she takes a long hard look at her own self-image. This movie has a powerful message for our "it is how you look that counts" society.

UNLIKELY TRIUMPHS

Hoosiers (1986, PG)

HOOSIERS is a stirring movie about teamwork, discipline, and second chances that features exciting basketball action and a close up look at life in Indiana in the 1950s. Hired to coach a small-town high school team, Norm Dale (Gene Hackman) searches for personal redemption in his quest to lead the underdogs of Hickory High School to victory at the state championships. In a memorable scene, Dale gets a lecture from a group of locals on how things are done in Hickory: You need to be a God-fearing man, you must always set a fine example for the boys, and, more importantly, you mustn't mess with the traditional zone defense. With help from assistant coach Shooter (Dennis Hopper), a recovering alcoholic, Dale and his team surprise everyone in Indiana by making it all the way to the state finals. This film is much more than your typical Hollywood underdog sports movie.

Stand and Deliver (1988, PG)

Based on the true story of a Los Angeles teacher who converted apathetic students into math stars, STAND AND DELIVER is full of Spanish (without subtitles), calculus, and inspiration. Jaime Escalante (Edward James Olmos) will do anything to coach his poor, Latino students through college-level math, even sneak out of his hospital bed to get back to work. Escalante quits his job at a software company to teach computer science in the barrio, only to discover that the school—impoverished Garfield High—lacks computers. Determined to turn around his students' lives, he begins by teaching algebra to remedial math students, and eventually shepherds them through a highly advanced course in calculus. Escalante and his students all make significant sacrifices to achieve academic honors. The teacher nearly kills himself with work and the students weather an unjustified cheating scandal. Eventually this group of ghetto youth prove they have the right stuff for college and beyond.

PAST THRILLERS

The Blair Witch Project (1999, R)

Combining Hi-8 video with black-and-white 16 mm film, this film presents a raw look at what can happen when college students forego common sense and enter the world of voodoo and witchcraft. Presented as a straightforward documentary, the film opens with a title card explaining that in 1994, three students went into the Maryland back woods to do a film project on the Blair Witch incidents. These kids were never seen again, and the film you are about to see is from their recovered equipment, found in the woods a year later. The entire movie documents their adventures leading up to their final minutes. The Blair Witch incident, as we initially learn from the local town elders, is an old legend about a group of witches who tortured and killed several children many years ago. Everyone in town knows the story and they're all sketchy on the details. Out in the woods and away from their parked car (and civilization), what starts as a school exercise turns into a nightmare when the three kids lose their map. Forced to spend extra days finding their way out, the kids then start to hear horrific sounds outside their tents in the pitch-black middle of night. They also find strange artifacts from (what can only be) the Blair Witch, still living in the woods. Frightened, they desperately try to find their way out of the woods, with no luck. Slowly these students start to unravel, knowing they have no way of getting out, no food, and it's getting cold.

The Sixth Sense (1999, PG-13)

In this tense tale of psychological terror, Dr. Malcolm Crowe (Bruce Willis) is a child psychologist whose new patient has a problem far outside his usual area of expertise. Cole Sear (Haley Joel Osment) is six-years-old and claims to see the spirits of dead people all around him. It seems that Cole has psychic powers and can channel the ghosts of those who were troubled. Cole doesn't understand his powers, and he has little control over them; he's constantly terrified by what he sees, and Dr. Crowe is the only one with whom he feels he can share this secret. However, as the doctor digs deeper into Cole's strange powers, it leads to strange and unexpected consequences for both of them. A smart thriller that is genuinely haunting, far scarier than many R-rated movies.

... AND ONE OF THE BEST NATURE FILMS YOU'LL EVER SEE

The Last Lions (2011, PG)

A resilient lioness in Botswana's Okavango Delta embarks on a heart-pounding journey of survival in this nature documentary from National Geographic. Narrated by Academy Award winner Jeremy Irons, THE LAST LIONS follows Ma di Tau ("Mother of Lions") as she races to get her cubs to safety during a rampaging fire, and fends off ferocious lioness Silver Eye, the murderous matriarch of a rival pride. Crossing crocodile-infested waters on a quest to reach Duba Island, the fiercely protective mother discovers that in order for her family to survive, she must conquer a herd of buffalos with piercing horns. Later, in an incredible turn of fate, Ma di Tau forges a fragile alliance with a rival pride in order to wage a desperate battle to preserve their bloodline in the face of certain extinction. It took six years of patient—sometimes dangerous, up close—videography to create this real story of survival and death in the African savannah. If you watch only one nature film in your life, this is among the best.