

Gerunds and Infinitives: Lord of the Rings--Return of the King

READING
TEXT

The Weekly News Movie Review

by Roberto Keskin

Let me say this at the outset. When I was a child, I clung to J.R.R. Tolkein's books as if my life depended on them. They accompanied me every day for nearly a year of my elementary school life. In fact, Middle Earth played a larger role in my life, at that time, than my best friends and the girls I tried to impress with my quotations. When, as a film reviewer, I learned that some filmmaker in New Zealand was going to bring my beloved books to the silver screen, I thought, "Blasphemy! It can't be done. And they shouldn't even try!"

Well, Peter Jackson has finished his trilogy and I am not ready to burn him at the stake. Nor have the books lessened in my imagination. Jackson has pulled off the rarest of feats. He has breathed new and altogether different life into Frodo's adventures. One can read the books and also begin anew by spending a few (many actually) hours with their celluloid rendering. The final instalment on The Lord of the Rings is a towering achievement.

Trilogies are a tricky business. Few movie trilogies, let alone the often leather-bound books they are based upon, have succeeded in remaining fresh and alive through a third instalment. "Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King", however, is one of the few that succeeds. It not only concludes the series, but defines and reinvents it, much as did the concluding novel. In scenes of redemption contrasted with devastating violence, sweeping chaos and humane hope, "The Return of the King" is a joyous conclusion to an unforgettable trilogy which has inspired a new generation of J.R.R. Tolkein fans. Is it too much to suggest that it is probably the finest fantasy-novel adaptation in the history of cinema? Ask your ten-year old child.

As in the second film, "The Two Towers", "The Return of the King" divides its time between three plots. Frodo (Elijah Wood) and Sam (Sean Astin), the two peaceful hobbits, continue their dramatic journey to destroy the Ring of Power. Their journey leads them to Mount Doom, in Mordor, where they must destroy the ring which has caused so much havoc throughout the

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mythical history of Middle Earth. But here, in this final chapter, they finally understand that their trek has really been a journey in confronting their own fears and finding their inner strength.

Paralleling this story is that of Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen), the King foreshadowed in the film's title. He leads the wise elf Legolas (Orlando Bloom) and the gruff dwarf Gimli (John Rhys-Davies) to assemble a legion of ghosts to rise up and fight to honour an ancient promise. The third plot is that of the wise and wily wizard Gandalf (Ian McKellan) and the other young hobbits who find themselves fighting to preserve the world of men in the city of Minas Tirith.

“The Return of the King” is more than three and a half hours long. Yet, this reviewer never once tired of its run, nor did his ten-year old son. The detail, the characters, the battles, the special effects and the scenery were mesmerizing. In truth, both my son and I didn't want the film to end.

Almost every aspect of “The Return of the King” is an improvement over the previous two films. There is more focus on character development. The fights are larger and more creative. The acting is given more time to play out and we feel more connected as a result. “The Lord of the Rings” has proven that its vision, scope and passion are true, not only to the needs of 21st century theatre-goers, but also to the millions of children who were weaned on Tolkein. The film, of course, has grandiose sweeping moments, but it also contains small moments of humanity, as when Gandalf speaks of the quiet, peaceful afterlife.

In the end, “The Lord of the Rings” is an entertaining adventure. But, adventures are inspiring because they breathe life into our mundane, acquiesced lives. Are our lives really so different from that of the characters in the movie? Slaying our evil bosses, carrying the fears symbolized by the ring, fulfilling a destiny. Are we not, eternally in search not only of adventure, but also of those who will take the adventure with us? As a child, Tolkein taught me this valuable lesson. Although “The Lord of the Rings” is still a huge, gaudy, horribly expensive entertainment empire, in every theatre there is still a child who squirms in delight at the tale and exits the theatre wondering if they can make it up that mountain with the ring in the palm of their hand. “The Lord of the Rings” is ultimately an affirmation of life, destiny and dreams.

Underline the GERUNDS and INFINITIVES used in the text. Why is each of them used?

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Write a sentence with each of the following words and expressions.

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|-----|------------------------------|-------|
| 1. | TO CLING TO | _____ |
| 2. | TO PLAY A ROLE
IN | _____ |
| 3. | A TRILOGY | _____ |
| 4. | A SPECTACLE | _____ |
| 5. | TO REMAIN FRESH | _____ |
| 6. | HAVOC | _____ |
| 7. | A TREK | _____ |
| 8. | TO FORESHADOW | _____ |
| 9. | A LEGION OF | _____ |
| 10. | SCOPE | _____ |
| 11. | GRANDIOSE | _____ |
| 12. | MUNDANE | _____ |
| 13. | TO PLAY OUT | _____ |
| 14. | TO SQUIRM | _____ |

Answer the following questions.

1. What role did Tolkein's books play in the author's childhood?

2. According to the author, what were the challenges in making films of the Lord of the Rings trilogy?

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3. What are the three plots in “The Return of the King”?

4. According to the author, how is the final film better than the first two?

5. What parallels does the author draw between the movie and real life?