



Penelope

Marilyn Kaye , Reese Witherspoon (Introduction)

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A modern-day fairytale--a major motion picture starring Christina Ricci, Catherine O'Hara, James McAvoy, and Reese Witherspoon.

Penelope Wilhern has everything a girl could want: A wealthy, socialite family, an enchanted bedroom and some of the coolest clothes around. There is only one problem: She was born into a cursed family and has the face of a pig.

Hidden away from the world, Penelope now finds herself subjected to a string of snobby, blue-blooded bachelors in a desperate attempt to find her a husband in order to break the curse. Though she yearns for something greater, what's a girl to do when faced with a determined mother and her matchmaking sidekick? Hoping to snap a photo of the mysterious girl, mischievous tabloid reporter Lemon hires down-on-his-luck Max to pose as a prospective suitor and infiltrate the family. But when Max finds himself truly drawn to Penelope, he can't bring himself to expose and disappoint her, so he just disappears. Fed up with this latest betrayal and determined to live life on her own terms, Penelope decides to break free from her family and go out into the world in search of adventure. Hiding her true identity with a scarf, Penelope discovers a wondrous world where freedom opens her eyes to possibilities she never knew existed. Making new friends along the way, she discovers happiness in the most unexpected places.

Penelope Details

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From Reader Review Penelope for online ebook

Alyssa says

I'm always picky about books that come out *after* a movie, so the fact that I gave this four stars is completely indicative of the fact that it does the movie justice.

This book is about a girl who has the face of a pig. Or, rather, the nose of a pig, because she is really very pretty in spite of it. The only way she can get rid of her pig-nose is by breaking the curse that put it there, and the curse requires that she be loved by "one of her own kind."

So number one on my list of things-I-love-about-this-book: Penelope's mother. I like the fact that I dislike her character so much. I like the fact that she is a character I can hate with every fiber of my being, and how she is the bad guy, and probably always will be. I like how she is always in the way and always pushing, so incredibly clueless and vacant. I enjoy characters like her; they're fun.

Number two on my list is the story itself. After all, who doesn't love a good love story? But all that aside, I like the fact that it's an unconventional love story, in which the female and male character do not play the role of hero and damsel-in-distress. They spend the majority of their time apart, but you still come to know them as themselves. I like how Penelope goes out and makes friends. She fights her own battles while Max fixes his own problems.

Number three on my list of things is the fact that Lemon is a good guy. Quite frankly, the book does a much better job of conveying the fact that he is not the bad guy, but simply a man with a dream that just happens to center around the story of Penelope. So much of his character was absent in the movie.

Now on to the list of things I did not like:

One. I HATED the mere fact that one cannot simply put James McAvoy into this book. I just hated it. So incredibly much.

The second thing I really didn't take to was how everything just... happened. It was like the book lacked proper transition, maybe because the author wanted to mimic the movie. I don't know. It was just... odd. Overall, this book was very enjoyable, and as a book based off of a movie, I would most definitely recommend it to anyone who loves reading, romance, and a taste of adventure.

Elizzy B says

Penélope es una bonita historia sobre quererse a una misma. Había visto la película hacía años y tenía el libro, y como guardaba buen recuerdo, decidí leerlo. Lo primero que me sorprendió fue lo parecido que era con el film, pero es que descubrí que el libro se había hecho después, lo que lo explicaba todo.

Aunque es una prosa sencilla, la verdad es que engancha porque es una historia bonita, con la que te puedes identificar. No esperéis un gran libro, ni nada original si ya habéis visto la película, pero os la recomiendo mucho, por su mensaje, sobre crecer y madurar, y su imagen de cuento para adultos pero con dulzura.

Alex says

It's not that I didn't enjoy the book...I just found the movie is a much more rewarding way of experiencing this story. Very rarely would I pick a movie over a novel, but I think part of that might be because this was not a novel that inspired a movie, but the novelization of a movie.

While the story had some differences--I did enjoy that Annie had much more a role than the sidekick, funny friend; that her relationship with Penelope actually helped lead Penelope to some realizations about herself--overall it was missing the interesting nuances that the actors brought to the characters. They were the same characters, just missing some of the magic to them. In fact, most of the characters seemed completely one-dimensional. Penelope's mother was awful, her father was weak, Edward was a whiner, and even Max (or Johnny) lacked the dimension he should have had. Really it was an over-simplified version of a story that had the potential to be so magical.

That being said, I did enjoy the book. Annie's influence on Penelope in particular I found very interesting. She actually was a friend, giving advice and help when needed and even sometimes when it wasn't wanted. And Penelope's narration was very pleasing--I enjoyed her as a narrator and the little secrets she revealed about herself and her family (her retelling of what her life would have been had she been born normal was both amusing and interesting). And of course the sense of empowerment the curse actually does give Penelope--SHE has the power to lift the curse, she doesn't need someone else to do it for her--was well done. That's a pretty big step for any "fairy-tale," and I enjoyed that as the conclusion to this modern fairy tale.

Lindsey says

Oh, the pain of disillusionment!

So this is just about my favorite movie of all time. Ever. I'm not going to claim that it's anything groundbreaking or world-changing like Star Wars or Breakfast at Tiffany's, but it's one of those movies that feels self-created and effortless; it wasn't written and cast and soundtracked and produced and acted out and recorded, it just grew out of the ground. (When something man-made seems natural, that is a very strong indicator that it was meticulously planned and worked and reworked within an inch of its life. Why is it so hard for us poor mortals to do what real life does without trying?) So when I saw the book in the library system I was enthralled. My favorite movie ever was a book first! What have I ever done to deserve such rapture?

Ahem. Anyway, she says as she furtively wipes her eyes, I requested it, and it came. The cover had the actors and actresses on it, which is less than ideal—I hate movie tie-in covers—but not a big deal. Then, as I read a ways into it, examined the cover more closely, checked the publishing date against the movie's release date, I realize the truth with dawning horror.

It's not the inspiration for my darling 'Penelope' with a movie tie-in cover.

It's director-endorsed post- movie release fanfic by the queen of parenthetical asides.

I've experienced this crushing disappointment many times in reverse, where the movie is a gross caricature of a beloved book. I've grown desensitized, even come to expect the worst of a movie adaptation and be pleasantly surprised when it's not as horrible as I expected. I just didn't have enough warning to put on my bulletproof vest for this go around.

All right, for a book adaptation of a movie, it wasn't bad. Ms. Kaye altered the setting to make it more distinctly modern—references to Captain Jack Sparrow, visits to schmancy nightclubs, that sort of thing—which I suppose some people might like; personally I preferred the fairytale-like device the movie used to blur the concept of time or place, and I would generally advise authors to avoid dating their books. She changed a lot of the scenes, gave Penelope a bit of a seventeen-year-old, flippant voice, and made Annie

a lot less cool than the Reese Witherspoon version. She also made Max/Johnny a lot more skater-hottie—in the movie, he really wasn't cute, actually rather homely, but somehow came off as very attractive, especially when his eyes were a little less red. (Once again, I'm inclined to prefer the movie version). Edward, I have to admit, she captured to a tee.

It lacked the timeless beauty and charm of the movie, but overall, it was a cute, shallow, lighthearted middle-grade reworking. My advice: if you saw the movie and loved it, don't bother with the book. You're not missing much.

(But if you haven't seen the movie, for heaven's sake go watch it!)

Sarah says

So, I was slightly worried on the first few pages that this would end up being a slightly easy, grade-school type of adaptation that I would end up putting down and abandoning halfway through. That was so not the case and I'm glad I picked it up at the library.

The plot was very well fleshed out, with adorable added little details. The same could be said for the characters. The insight into everyone's minds at play during the action of the movie was extremely entertaining and I laughed out loud numerous times, something I don't generally do unless a book is really that good. Very charming.

I highly recommend this to any fan of the movie. You'll breeze through it on a rainy afternoon and never want to give it back--that is, if you borrowed it from the library. I know when I put it back through the slot I felt a little sad and mentally added it to my 'buy' list.

Give it a read!

Stephanie says

Didn't get a chance to see the movie, so I got the book for three dollars at Half Price Books.

Definitely enjoyed reading it. I thought the plot was a clever inversion of the typical fairy tale story, and the twists and turns felt very natural (such as the reporter posing as her suitor, and the way Penelope becomes a celebrity just because she has a pig nose.) The plot didn't go that deep into the human psyche (you could do a lot more with questions about to what extent our appearance defines us, whether or not we need to be saved, etc), but the creativity was welcome.

There wasn't a lot of description, so I think the movie probably does a better job of setting the scene. I will have to check it out. Also, the love interest Max/Johnny didn't seem to appear often enough for there to be real chemistry between him and Penelope. You can't tell if someone is deep just by if they look sad. Also, his decision to leave Penelope seems too romance-cliche and selfish. Though a gambling problem would be a real red flag in a relationship, but his character wasn't developed very much.

I'm a sucker for all fairy tales, so I guess I'll keep this on my shelf. Overall it feels pretty standard.

SarahC says

I am not sure how to judge novels adapted from screenplays, but this one I could not resist due to the movie being a great favorite of mine. It was a pleasant read bringing back so much of what I love of this story of a girl trying to find herself. It is an entertaining story with a really important message -- true parallels to everyday life actually. If nothing else, I will say go see the film - it is great.

Reading Vacation says

REVIEW

Penelope was an incredibly cute story. I loved reading about Penelope's childhood as a girl with the face of a pig. It was such an emotional story that I felt very strongly connected to Penelope. Caveny did such a great job of drawing me into Penelope's unusual world.

All of the characters were so well written. I fell in love with sweet Max and don't even get me started on Penelope's mother. I felt sorry for her and I was frustrated with her at the same time! Every character added their own personality to this awesome tale.

The story itself taught a very important lesson. If you are ever feeling down about yourself, just say "I like myself just the way I am" and you will feel better. So yeah, love yourself just as you are.

Oh, and how's this for a change-of-pace? The Penelope book is based on the screenplay of the Penelope movie. I had to be different though, so I read the book first and saw the movie second. I'm sneaky like that! They are nearly identical, except that the book has more detail. Loved 'em both!

I super highly recommend this fun and easy read.

RATING

5 Plot

5 Characters

5 Attention Grabbing

5 Girlie Meter

5 Ending

25 TOTAL

5 STARS

Beth says

I love this movie so I wanted to read the book based on the screenplay. I've finished it now and I did not like it. The story felt clunky and a bit all over the place and the writing was often rather awkward. It gave me a few chuckles (what with its over-the-top descriptions) but overall it was not a book I'd recommend.

Hristina says

I adore the movie this book is based on, I watch it every few months. It's very well done and entertaining, the cast is amazing and so is the photography. It feels like a breath of fresh air every time I watch it.

To be honest, this book could've been done a little bit better. It captures the same magical atmosphere of the movie, but it's in snippets. If I went into this book unbiasedly, I would give it 3 or 4 stars, 3.5 is the rating it deserves. But I've spent so much time with these characters that I couldn't help but enjoy it throughout, and I want more.

Lily says

So, if you read the description of the book, it's pretty much spot on. It's about a girl with a pig's nose (not the entire face, only the nose because the rest was removed) who has been hidden away in her home for all of her life, meeting wealthy, blue-blooded men in order to find one to marry. The family interpreted the cure for the curse as this: it can only be lifted if she marries another blue blood. Along the way, she ends up falling for a man trying to expose her, but he finds he has similar feelings, so he ditches the idea entirely and kind of disappears from the story. Then Penelope decides (at age twenty-five) to finally leave home in order to experience the real world and find herself. "Making new friends along the way, she discovers happiness in the most unexpected places." The end.</p>

So this book was originally a movie. Yes I wrote that correctly. Usually movies are made *after* the books, but Penelope was adapted from the screenplay. I saw the movie before I read this and thought it was so cute that I had to buy it, and I still watch it every once in a while. In addressing the book, I thought some things about the story line could have been a little more exact. Yes, I've heard of poetic license and everything, but there were some changes that really bothered me. Granted, a few of them were small things, like where she sat and looked through the one way mirror to interview the bachelors. In the movie, it was in her room, in the book, it was in the dining room. It was small little things like that that I think should have been pulled straight from the movie because it effected the situation so that I found it wasn't close enough to the original inspiration. After watching the movie, I had all these great scenes in my mind, and the book was set up perfectly. I found it extremely disappointing that so many opportunities were missed when writing the book.</p>

The writing style wasn't that bad, though. For the most part, it pretty good, but I wasn't getting that special something that should have made it go the extra mile. Yet I think some of that was the issue with character development. A few characters, like Penelope, of course, were incredibly well developed, yet others fell flat for me. I understand that the movie/script didn't delve real deep into some of the characters, but if anything, the extent that we get to know the characters is what should have been altered from the movie. I have no idea if this was the original script writer/movie company or whatnot absolutely not allowing it, so I'm not trying to blame the author. Still, I wanted to know more about Lemon and (view spoiler)

Penelope herself was a bit of a problem, too. Now this is not the author's fault, it was just how the character was originally written, but I feel like some big points have been skirted around. For example, SHE IS AND ADULT. Do you hear that? An adult! She can legally drink, yet somehow her parents seem to think that they can still tell her what to do and she accepts it. If Penelope didn't like having to have dozens of eligible men paraded around in front of her, she didn't have to! I felt that when she finally left home, it was a little underwhelming, because she had been hiding behind her mother's skirt for so long, complaining, when she could have just left and spared herself seven years of torture. I understand that she apparently didn't know how the world worked, so maybe she was scared, but after wanting freedom for so long, that seems almost ridiculous. Which brings me to my second point. She makes a big deal of stating how much she read and watched TV and movies. This confuses me, because when she walks into a hotel she has no idea that she actually has to *pay* for a room. To me, that seems like something that could be easily deducted from any number of books and movies.

In general though, it has a cute story line and I still enjoy the movie. I think most of this book's issues is that it comes from the screenplay, and movies can get away with a lot more than books can. So for the most part, the author did a good job with what she was handed. I wouldn't say this is one of those books you absolutely *have* to read, but it's good for some clean entertainment.

Carol Hardesty says

As I'm sure many of you are aware by now, I love fairy tales. They're so simple yet so resonant. They show us how to be better people and encourage us to follow our dreams, no matter what the odds. So it's a rare and wonderful thing when a new, original fairy tale enters the world. As such, "Penelope" shows the right way to tell a modern-day fairy tale. Firstly, it's subtle in its storytelling; "Penelope" just sort of goes with the flow and lets you enjoy the story without bashing you on the head. Secondly, while it's aware that there are harsh people in the world, it's also aware that there are good people too. Thirdly, Penelope herself is an admirable heroine. She's unpretentious, bright, friendly, and brave. She grows and matures during the course of her adventures, learns independence, and creates her own happy ending. (Take note, storytellers!) Finally, the message "Penelope" gives is *such a breath of fresh air*. It tells us that before we can love others, we must first love ourselves. How often do you find a moral like that these days? That's why I give "Penelope" the highest, five-star rating. Because it's modern fantasy at its very best.

Mayra says

I never have many good hopes when I open up a book that has "adapted from the screenplay" on its cover. And there has been some worthy exceptions. But this one was not one of those. It was very, very disappointing. The film was immensely better, which left me only with the idea that there wasn't really a necessity of a book for it, even less of such a "meh" one.

Yue says

Charming book, and I am not sure because I don't remember the movie that well, but I think the movie is slightly better than the book. Mainly because of the end, and because I could see why Max/John falls for Penelope. In the book, it seems bit rushed, specially the ending. And Penelope's mother redeems herself in the movie, while in the book she doesn't. Also, Max/John is a pianist, a talented one (was he a pianist on the movie? I can't remember, but I think he wasn't).

Nevertheless, this is a good, fun, light fantasy book. Penelope is likeable (in spite of having a snout, she was never a depressed character), Lemon the journalist is likeable (he starts as "the villain" but he actually has a soft heart), and Max/John is likeable (a bit weak

but he is nice). Anyone who has seen the movie knows the moral of the story: to love yourself.

I felt like I was watching a Bryan Fuller's tv show, like "Pushing Daisies". It has that aura.

Needless to say that I want to rewatch the movie.

Valerie says

First off I should say that I really like the story line, with the curse and all that. However, the author doesn't really go into depth with the characters. It's not that the characters are unlikeable, you just don't get the full idea of who they are.

I probably would've liked the book more if I hadn't watched the movie already. There were no surprises and the book pretty much follows the movie.

I liked the book, but if you already watched the movie you aren't missing out on much.
