

How 'Free Birds' Animated Film Tries to Change History

The new animated feature *Free Birds* is about two unlikely turkey heroes, Jake and Reggie, who travel back in time to 1621 to stop the Pilgrims from putting turkey on their menu.

Once arriving in 1621, Jake and Reggie are thrust in the middle of a cat-and-mouse hunt as they meet a flock of turkeys constantly hunted by a barbaric Pilgrim hunter. Jake and Reggie then hatch a plan to stop the Pilgrim's planned feast and possibly change turkey history.

While *Free Birds* does have a fun time looking at history through a different set of eyes, Movieguide believes the movie could be confusing for children. What's problematic with *Free Birds* isn't the fact that turkeys are time-traveling to the past. What's dangerous is when false ideas and perceptions of important historical events are implanted in a child's mind.

Almost no children will come away from this movie thinking turkeys went to battle with the Pilgrims, but some may come away believing the Pilgrims were evil or stupid. At points, the movie also makes light of the starvation the Pilgrims were experiencing. Though the turkeys and Pilgrims work it out in the end, the film teaches children to be sympathetic in the wrong direction.

Movieguide recently had the opportunity to talk briefly with the director, Jimmy Hayward, about the movie.

We asked Hayward, who also co-wrote the screenplay, "When making a children's movie that's based around actual events, do you ever feel you have to balance between being both entertaining and educational?"

"With this picture," he said, "we obviously led more with

entertainment than anything. That's why we put a funny disclaimer at the beginning with George Takei. We didn't set out to make it super educational. That wasn't the idea. Not that we were trying to teach kids the wrong things."

He added, "We felt a real responsibility to make an entertaining, heartwarming picture with a good message. The message about the flock, togetherness, and [being] part of something bigger than yourself is probably the most education part about it. I think that's an opportunity, rather than trying to teach kids about history and stuff like that. That's what school is for. But I think there is a real message in the movie that's really important, that applies to all people."

Though the filmmakers had some noble intentions and did include some positive messages, which can be read in Movieguide's review, we encourage families to enjoy movies that are both entertaining and educational.

This article originally appeared on .