

New Harry Potter Movie Sizzles and Fizzles

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince continues the movie series' trend of making very good-but-not-great film adaptations. Its focus on character and (surprisingly) humor place it among the best of the Potter films, but its anti-climactic finish keeps it from claiming the top spot.

The series' sixth installment opens to a wizarding world in open war, where Voldemort's forces are no longer working in the shadows but actively terrorizing both good wizards and Muggles alike. Life at Hogwarts remains relatively unchanged, however. Harry deals with a new potions professor, fighting between Ron and Hermione, and his new feelings for Ron's sister, Ginny Weasley. Meanwhile, Dumbledore starts to teach Harry about Voldemort's past while Draco Malfoy is up to no good.

If you've read the books, you're sure to have guessed that many of their storylines get tossed aside because there just isn't enough screen time to include them all; although there are a couple nuggets tossed our way with this film that longtime fans might notice. As previous Potter flicks have, *Half-Blood Prince* focuses on only the major plotlines.

However, this film sets itself apart from the previous ones by adding a layer of characterization rarely seen in the series. Instead of jumping from plot point to plot point, director David Yates gives characters room to breathe, adding a lot of enjoyment to the ride. There's a surprising amount of humor for such a dark tale, which is one of author J.K. Rowling's best traits as the writer of the book series. These little moments bring the characters, from Dumbledore to Hermione to Slughorn, to life on-screen in a way that has rarely been captured outside the books.

If it had kept its momentum going throughout, *The Half-Blood Prince* could have ended up as the best in the Potter series. Unfortunately it starts to fall apart at the end, at which point a lot of scenes that should be action-packed and emotionally powerful leave you instead wanting more. Despite the film's running time of 2-1/2 hours, I think the filmmakers would have done well to devote 10 more minutes of screen time to creating a stronger resolution.

The ending notwithstanding, *Harry Potter and The Half-Blood Prince* is still one of the best movies of the summer. If you're a fan of the series, it's something you shouldn't miss.

Content Watch: *Harry Potter and The Half-Blood Prince* is rated PG, mostly for its scary images. There's almost no language or sexuality to be found (save for some teenage kissing), but definitely be wary of taking the little kids along, as the movie has some dark, scary and intense scenes.