

Rabbit Holes and Wimpy Kids

By Andrew “Hollywood” Henry

Two children’s tales have recently been brought to life on the silver screen. And while their executions are vastly different, the stories they tell are not that far off.

First up is Tim Burton’s “Alice in Wonderland,” a slightly updated telling of the classic tale. This time around, Alice is 19-years-old, and faced with the pressures and expectations of life. She returns to Wonderland, encounters all the old familiar characters, and finds herself thrusts into a battle she is not sure she wants to join. Yes Alice – it’s just like the real world! You have to make a choice!

I was lucky enough to see this in 3D and the CGI effects were awesome. Particularly the Cheshire Cat, with his floating body that can appear at every turn. Johnny Depp as usual takes front and center in his portrayal of the Mad Hatter. That is, if you can understand what he says half the time; his Mad Hatter has a bizarre Scottish brogue that would come and go.

The story holds up well, and the message of girl power comes across, though I do think by the end it became “Hey, look what we can do with these crazy effects!”

On the flip side of a girl falling down a rabbit hole into crazy special effects land, I also watched the story of a wimpy kid trying to make it in plain old middle school.

“Diary of a Wimpy Kid” is an adaptation of a popular children’s series which follows sixth-grader Greg Heffley and his desires to become “cool.” Of course, we all know that being a cool sixth-grader is an oxymoron. Yet this film is not filled with wizards, or dragons (or disappearing cats) – just the ordinary daily activities that every child goes through. Consider that school, family, and friends can have just as much drama and excitement as falling down a rabbit hole.

There are jokes in Wimpy Kid that are clearly geared towards children, and I thought I was watching a bad sitcom (but I don’t blame producers 20th Century Fox for this but rather Pixar for making a children movie entertaining for adults). But I am sure children will recognize a bit of themselves in Greg’s exploits, and hopefully see that you don’t need to go into a magic land to discover who you are.

Overall, I liked Alice for the visuals, the effects and the performances. I liked Diary of a Wimpy Kid for the heart and honesty of what it is like being an 11-year-old unpopular kid. Now if Hollywood can just find a way to combine them—that may be a movie I’d love.