



BY MR. RICK POOLE

*Coming To You From A Galaxy Far, Far Away: Geneva teacher, Mr. Poole, evaluates the newest addition of the “Star Wars” saga.*

“Star Wars” has been called a modern myth, and rightly so. The “Star Wars” films have been more than movies; they have been a cultural event bringing generations of filmgoers together to explore the meanings of life, sacrifice and love. “A New Hope,” released in 1977, is one of very few films to be protected in the Library of Congress’ National Film Registry as one of our national treasures.

2012 brought the biggest news in the “Star Wars” universe since a certain father and son revelation: Lucas was selling all of his created properties, including “Star Wars,” to the Walt Disney Corporation. That same day it was announced that at least three new “Star Wars” episodes had been green-lighted for production.

Two weeks ago, I sat in the theatre on opening night and wondered what I was in store for. It was exciting that “Star Wars” was back, but was it in safe hands with Disney? Would a company famous for homogenized plots and political correctness be a faithful guardian for the cultural treasure that “Star Wars” had become?

“The Force Awakens” did not rise to the level of its most famous ancestor. I’m not sure how any new “Star Wars” film ever could. What was once so original and groundbreaking has become the very standard by which these stories are now measured. If you are looking for a film to surpass everything that came before it, then “Star Wars” has become its own worst enemy.

The bar has been set too high. But we needn’t expect more from “The Force Awakens” than it delivered.

The film was executed to near perfection by director J. J. Abrams. Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Adam Driver and the rest of the young cast deliver fantastic performances. The art direction is interesting and perfectly suited to the quirky, lived-in universe of “Star Wars.” This film has action, suspense, humor- and it is thoroughly enjoyable to watch.

From the first scene we get a familiar but fast-paced plot driven by a new generation of heroes and villains: Ace Pilot, Poe Dameron; Stormtrooper with a conscience, Finn; the villainous Kylo Ren; and the mysterious desert scavenger, Rey. These fresh faces mesh perfectly with the old ones we have come to cherish.

Speaking of old faces, Carrie Fisher, Harrison Ford, and Mark Hamill return to reprise the roles of Princess Leia, Han Solo, and Luke Skywalker, thirty years after the events of “Return of The Jedi.” It is fun seeing them in action again, and while they all seem up to the task of carrying the films forward, it is important to remember that this is not their story.

As far as this newest chapter is concerned, there are few problems worth mentioning. The director perhaps bit off more characters than he could chew in two hours. Several of the lead characters lack enough development to make us care about them as much as we would like to. This is a minor problem and one that will perhaps be fixed as more of the story opens up

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in Episodes VIII and IX. One thing Abrams did perfectly in “The Force Awakens” is to leave the mysteries alone. The film delivers far more questions than it answers and this is a brilliant way to draw in a new generation while keeping the older ones interested.

Our new generation of characters seems to all be orphans of one variety or another. Finn was taken from a family he will never know, Rey longs for the parents who abandoned her, Kylo Ren severs his relationship to his father in a permanent and painful fashion, all of these point to a larger question as a generation without parents struggles to answer the question: who are we? Perhaps this question is at the heart of the film.

The Force, as the mystical dimension of Star Wars, is one of the defining characteristics of the original trilogy. Yoda teaches us that at the deepest level, we are all “luminous beings, not this crude matter.” The “Star Wars” of my youth was more than a story of good vs. evil; it was also about a spiritual awakening.

Luke Skywalker’s triumph over Darth Vader was, first and foremost, a sacred one in which hatred and fear are conquered by hope and love. Luke is heroic because he comes to embody these ideals. We want to follow in his footsteps, and as we strive to do so, we become more heroic ourselves. This is one of the great values of myth.

Actress Daisy Ridley steals the show, but the journey of her character, Rey, seems more emotional than spiritual. While her heroism is undeniable, it stems from her perseverance and talent more than from any moral standard she is trying to achieve. It is interesting to note that of the seven films in the franchise thus far, all but two of them have referenced an afterlife. It wasn’t necessary to include in “The Force Awakens,” but the narrative felt slightly diminished to me without it.

I’m amazed at the continuing power of these films to bring so many people together in a spirit of wonder. Episode VII is a story about brand new heroes, and Rey’s tale in particular is just getting started. It shows a great deal of promise and I am excited to see how a new generation of fans will embrace this story as it unfolds. May the Force be with them.

**“Excited to see it, but won’t be here for opening night; won’t be in a costume.”**

**-Mrs. Susan Greenlees**

**“I honestly didn’t know it was coming out until Mr. Graham was talking about it.”**

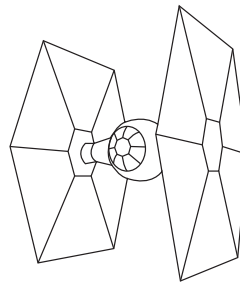
**-Mrs. Catherine Davis**

**“I’m excited, but it’s still just a movie.”**

**-Mr. Paul Johnson**

**“I cannot wait to see it! Harrison Ford is the bomb.com! Just saying...”**

**-Mrs. Jill Daniels**



**“I have over 30 years of hope and expectation stored up. After suffering through the prequels, the stakes are high. I will either emerge a new man, alive in the glory of the light side of the force, or enter into a long period of depression from which I may never emerge.”**

**-Mr. Steven Tye**

