

Film Title: *The Secret of Kells* (2009)
Length of Film in Minutes: 71 Minutes
Film Genre: Fantasy/ Animation

Reviewer Name and Grade: Sarina P., 9th Grade

Date Reviewed: February 16, 2021

The Secret of Kells is a film about Brendan, a young boy who is sent on a magical journey in order to complete the last page of a sacred book with the help of the illuminator. He hadn't previously been outside of his village, but must go to the nearby forest when he is sent out by the illuminator to collect berries to use as ink. Along the way he meets Aisling, the guardian of the forest, and the two work together to get the berries. Aisling only agrees to help Brendan so he will leave her forest, but the two eventually start to form a bond. Brendan's Uncle is against him finishing the book, and is focused on building a fortress to keep out the vikings. Brendan's uncle locks him up to prevent him from finishing the book, but he is freed by Aisling. Brendan later has to go on dangerous missions to complete the book, including fighting a giant eel spirit. The vikings later invaded, nearly killing Brendan's uncle and causing Brendan and the illuminator to flee the village of Kells. After a time skip to when Brendan is an adult, he returns to the village to finally finish the book. The film is based on Irish mythology, and uses 2D animation resembling watercolor to tell the story.

How did you find the film on Kanopy (by title search, subject search, casual browsing, etc.)?

I found this film through casual browsing. I thought the art style looked pretty, which is why I picked it.

Did the plot (for fictional movie) or presentation of information (for documentary) keep you interested?

The plot of the film was fairly complicated, so while it didn't get particularly boring, it was somewhat hard to understand, especially since it is meant for a younger audience.

Was the pace of the film too fast, too slow, or just right?

The film's pacing seemed to give time to the wrong scenes sometimes. It would've been nice if the beginning of the film had been longer to give the viewer more introduction to the plot, and it also ended quite abruptly.

What grade level(s) is this film appropriate for?

While it appeared to be a kids film, there were some darker scenes towards the end of the film which would lead me to suggest it for grades 5 and up. I still think kids could handle it, but very young children might be scared by the violence.

3 stars: It was okay; I had hoped for better.

Considering that the main reason why I chose this film was the art style, it is only fair I address it. The backgrounds are beautiful, and the animation is very smooth. The character design was a bit of a hit or miss, though. The main 4 character's shape language is very strong and conveys their characters well. My issue lies in the supporting cast. The main problem was the stylistic choices taken for the only African character in the film which looked like somewhat of a racist caricature. While I doubt this was the intent, the big, pink lips are not given to any of the other characters and really should've been toned down.

Moving on to the plot, it could've been made easier to understand considering the intended audience was children. I did like the character dynamic between Brendan and Aisling, however. The music choice was also quite pleasing and conveyed the story well. Overall, the movie had a nice aesthetic, but there were areas that could've been improved.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Amal K., 8th Grade

Date Reviewed: April 1, 2021

During the 9th century Ireland, a young curious boy named Brendan lived in a village with the Abbot, his uncle, the ruler of the village. The Abbot tells the villagers to build a wall around the village to protect the villagers from the Vikings who were to come. Then one day a master illuminator by the name of Brother Aidan arrives. He brings with him an unfinished book that holds great wisdom and is said to bring light to the darkness. The illuminator sees Brendan as a suitable apprentice. He asks Brendan to go to the forest to get berries for ink so he can finish the book. The Abbot had forbidden Brendan to go so he is hesitant. He eventually went into the forest where he met a fairy, Aisling, who helps him find the berries. With the help of Aisling, Brendan eventually finds the berries and leaves the forest then goes back to his village. However, he is caught by the Abbot and is let off with a warning to not go again. Brendan then helps the illuminator finish the book. The book is believed to bring enlightenment to evil and is to be the best attack against the Vikings. However, the Abbot doesn't agree as he believes the wall will save them. He locks Brendan up so he can not complete the book. Brendan however escapes with the help of Aisling and tries to finish the book in secret with the help of the illuminator. They were too late though because the Vikings had shown up. The Vikings destroyed the village and the Illuminator and Brendan ran away to save the book. They ran to a faraway place and finish the book as they grow old together. The now-adult Brendan goes back to the Village shows the now old Abbott the book. The Abbot is enlightened by the book and it brings tears to his eyes giving him the wisdom and joy to get over his past mistakes.

How did you find the film on Kanopy (by title search, subject search, casual browsing, etc.)?

I found the film through casual browsing.

Did the plot (for fictional movie) or presentation of information (for documentary) keep you interested?

In the beginning, it had seemed boring but the animation style interested me so I kept watching.

Was the pace of the film too fast, too slow, or just right?

I would say it's just right. It may seem slow to some people but if you enjoy films like this it won't seem slow at all.

What grade level(s) is this film appropriate for?

The film is appropriate for any grade but to truly enjoy and understand it I think 7th grade and above would fit.

Rating:

4 stars. At first, I wanted to give this film 3 stars because some of it had been confusing especially if you didn't pay close attention. However, the quality and animation style is amazing and is calming to watch. The slow pace of the movie also helps make the animation stand out. The screenplay does a great job of bringing the traits out of each character. Overall it's a beautiful movie which I would watch again.