

CHRISTINA
RICCI

JAMES
MCAVOY

CATHERINE
O'HARA

REESE
AND WITHERSPOON

What Makes Us Different Makes Us Beautiful.

PENELOPE

STONE VILLAGE ENTERTAINMENT AND STONE VILLAGE PICTURES PRESENT A TYPE-A FILMS AND LARA KAPLAN FILM PRODUCTION A HEARTLAND TRULY MOVING PICTURE PRESENTATION "PENELOPE" CHRISTINA RICCI JAMES MCAVOY CATHERINE O'HARA REESE WITHERSPOON
CASTING BY PAUL BRUCE COSTUME DESIGNER JEFF TALBOT EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JAMES MCAVOY AND CATHERINE O'HARA PRODUCED BY ANANDA MANTON AND MICHAEL ANASTASOFF WRITTEN BY LESLIE CAFFEY AND ROBSON GREEN DIRECTED BY LARA KAPLAN
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS STEVE HODSON AND GREGORY JARVIS PRODUCED BY ANANDA MANTON AND MICHAEL ANASTASOFF WRITTEN BY LESLIE CAFFEY AND ROBSON GREEN
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TYPE-A FILMS
LARA KAPLAN FILMS
STONE VILLAGE ENTERTAINMENT
STONE VILLAGE PICTURES



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Developed by Heartland Truly Moving Pictures to accompany *Penelope*, recipient of the Truly Moving Picture Award, an honored distinction given to films that unlock the vast potential of the human spirit and enable us to view stories that display courage, integrity and hope, taking entertainment to a higher level.

www.TrulyMovingPictures.org



One Film Can.

Heartland Truly Moving Pictures, a non-profit organization, recognizes and honors films and filmmakers whose work explores the human journey by expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life. We believe that one film can move us to laughter, to tears, or to make a difference. *Penelope* is a movie that demonstrates that **One Film Can**.

Synopsis

In this modern day romantic tale, *Penelope* is about a young girl's inspiring journey, a mysterious family secret and the power of love. With all odds against her, in order for Penelope to break the family curse, she must find someone who loves her faithfully. The warm and funny adventure leads her to realize the most important life lesson, "I like myself the way I am."

The film features an all-star cast that includes Christina Ricci (*Monster, Prozac Nation*), Academy Award-winner Reese Witherspoon (*Walk the Line*), Emmy Award-winner Catherine O'Hara (*Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events, A Mighty Wind*), Richard E. Grant (*Bright Young Things, The Portrait of a Lady*), James McAvoy (*The Last King of Scotland*), Peter Dinklage (*The Station Agent, Elf*) and Simon Woods (*Pride and Prejudice, Elizabeth I*). Also featured are some of the UK's premiere comedic talents, including Ronni Ancona (*A Cock and Bull Story*), Nick Frost (*Shaun of the Dead, Kinky Boots*), and Lenny Henry (*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, Hope and Glory*).

Penelope is an original screenplay from writer Leslie Caveny (*Everybody Loves Raymond*), and marks the feature film debut of director Mark Palansky whose previous work includes the award-winning short films *Shutter* and *The Same*. The film was produced by Stone Village Pictures' Scott Steindorff, Golden Globe-winner for his mini-series *Empire Falls*, and Type-A Films' Reese Witherspoon and Jennifer Simpson (*Legally Blonde II: Red, White and Blonde*), co-produced by Zephyr Films' Chris Curling and Philip Robertson (*Decameron, Young Hannibal*), and executive produced by Stone Village's Dylan Russell.

I like myself the way I am

Penelope is the tale of a young woman struggling to come to terms with her appearance and how it defines her. Her overprotective mother and father are part of the barrier preventing Penelope from realizing that she can like herself the way she is. By venturing out on her own and discovering who she truly is, Penelope finally overcomes her mother's and her own insecurities in order to realize that she likes herself the way she is.

Discussion Questions

- A lot of people, like Penelope, struggle to be able to say they like themselves the way they are. What are the things about yourself and about your life that make you happy?
- Do you have barriers that prevent you from appreciating things about yourself? What are those barriers? Are there ways that you can approach and overcome them?
- *Penelope* offers an important message to young girls and boys. Many struggle with self-image and need help from peers and adults to overcome these negative self-images. What are some ways you can help others strengthen their self-image?
- Many times youth and adults are influenced by media about appearance. However, they are also influenced by negative things that peers and adults say about themselves such as "I'm fat" or "I feel disgusting today." What kinds of language and actions can be avoided in order to create an environment in which to cultivate positive self-image?
- Max, who we later come to know as Johnny, is just as trapped as Penelope by disfigurements. His are social disfigurements such as gambling and related behavior, rather than physical, but they trap him all the same. What are your disfigurements?

What makes us different makes us beautiful.

Once Penelope leaves the shelter of her home and ventures out into the world, sharing her unique self with others, she comes to finally accept who she is. The media storm created by the paparazzi when Penelope is discovered causes her face to be everywhere and she becomes a celebrity based on her unique appearance. While it is unnatural to believe those things that make us unique will offer us fame and fortune, it's important to celebrate those differences.

Penelope can be used to talk with youth not only about the importance of their individual appearance, but it can also be used to discuss diversity.

Discussion Questions

- What things about yourself do you notice as being different from others? How do these differences set you apart?
- Penelope is taught that her appearance is wrong because it is different. Have you ever been informed that something about you was wrong? What was it and how did you react?
- Have you ever pointed out someone else's difference? Why? How did it make the person feel and how did you feel after pointing it out?
- How would the world be different if everyone looked the same and acted the same? Would that be a world you would like to live in? Why or why not?
- Think about your friends and classmates and consider their unique attitudes and appearances. How are they each different and what do you like that is different about each person? Are there things you dislike? Why?

PENELOPE

It's not the power of the curse, it's the power you give the
CURSE. Leslie Caveny

Leslie Caveny, writer of *Penelope*, emphasizes that it's the power everyone gives the curse that makes it so powerful and not the curse itself. Jessica Wilhern, Penelope's mother, gives great power to the curse placed upon her daughter. She believes there is only one way for it to be broken, and that is to find someone who will accept Penelope for who she is. She never encourages Penelope to love herself the way she is, nor does she attempt to love her daughter the way she is.

The immense power Mr. and Mrs. Wilhern gave to the curse resulted in a daughter who didn't believe in herself. Much later we find that the power to overcome the curse was simple, all Penelope needed was faith in herself.

Discussion Questions

- What things in your life do you allow to control you because you place too much stock in them? In what ways do they control you?
- How can you overcome the control that you have given these thoughts?
- Mrs. Wilhern has an interesting role in this movie. She cares for Penelope, yet at the same time does not support and nurture Penelope in the way that is expected of a mother. How do you view the mother's character in this film? Do you feel as though she had changed by the end of the movie?
- Annie's friendship with Penelope is one of the ways in which Penelope comes to terms with her appearance. It also emphasizes the importance of true friendship. Do you feel that Annie and Penelope would have been friends if Annie had seen Penelope's face before getting to know her? What about Annie's character makes you believe that she would or would not have?

Truly Moving Moments

Penelope has been honored as a Heartland Truly Moving Picture Award-winning film. This award was created to honor films released theatrically that align with Heartland’s mission to recognize and honor films and filmmakers whose work explores the human journey by artistically expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life.

These award-winning movies are made up of Truly Moving moments – those moments that cause you to think, see something in your life differently, be inspired to do something. It’s what makes the movie and its message remain with you well after you’ve left the theatre.

Think about *Penelope*. What were the Truly Moving moments that stood out to you?

Discuss your most memorable moment in *Penelope*. How did it make you feel? How will it cause you to think about things differently in the future?

Share those Truly Moving moments with others at www.TrulyMovingPictures.org. Simply create a membership or login if you already have one and then search the movie list for *Penelope*. You can leave your review of the movie or thoughts about your Truly Moving Picture in the “Thoughts and Reviews” section.



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