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Kubo and the Two Strings

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Movie Review

Title: Kubo and the Two Strings
Main Performers: Art Parkinson, Charlize Theron, Matthew McConaughey
Director: Travis Knight
Reviewer: Abigail Packard
Studio: Laika
Year Released: 2016
Run Time: 102 minutes
MPAA Rating: PG
Interest Level: Primary, Intermediate
Rating: Excellent



Review

Each day Kubo descends from their mountain cave to visit the villagers. He tells them stories about Hanzo, a samurai warrior, that he weaves with his shamisen and origami paper that magically folds itself into the characters to act out the stories. Each evening he returns to the cave, making sure to return before dark. One late evening Kubo is approached by two masked women come to bring him to the Moon King, but his mother rescues him. Kubo wakes in a far-off place with a monkey. They embark on a journey and along the way find a man-turned-beetle who agrees to help them. They find the armor they are looking for after considerable difficulty and battles with both of the evil women. Kubo discovers that Monkey is his mother and Beetle is his father. Kubo faces the Moon King who asks him to live with him among the stars. When Kubo refuses, the Moon King transforms into a giant glowing dragon and they fight. Kubo wins and is able to help his parents' spirits travel into the afterlife in peace.

The film was created with stunning stop-motion technology that gives the art a clay-like look. Moreover, the artwork has an Asian feel which adds to the overall mystical look of the art and story. The story itself is filled with tragedies: the slipping mentality of Kubo's mother, the curse upon Kubo's father, the death of both parents. Despite these tragedies, there is a message of enduring hope and peace that permeates the story. Some of the plot was a little too predictable (that Monkey and Beetle were his parents, that Kubo would have to face both the masked women and the Moon King). But the story was sweet and adventurous, if a bit creepy. The origami scenes were spectacular and the artwork was magical. Overall, a good family-friendly film.