

I absolutely loved this book and movie. Believe it or not (no pun intended) this was my first time reading the book! I had seen the movie about 4 or 5 times, but never the book, and I couldn't be more pleased with the outcome. This film held true a lot more to the book than Jumanji did, perhaps with Chris Van Allsburg being one of the executive producers he had more say. There were still some changes, but most of the changes again was with the story line and it was just additional story.

I think one of the hardest things for me was that the boy's character in the movie had no name. The book is all in the first person, so it's kind of understood, but I was amazed that I had actually never realized this before. To deviate from the book a bit our main character, known as 'hero boy' in the movie did not believe in Santa Claus in the movie, versus already believing in the book. In the book 'hero boy' sees the Polar Express train from his bedroom window whereas in the movie he actually goes outside to see the train for the first time. It is when he puts his robe on to go see what the commotion is that we see 'hero boy' rip the hole in his robe. I actually thought all of these changes were appropriate. It's sad that in the movie version he didn't already believe in Santa, but I think that was a realistic change and made the story more heartfelt and believable. Another change was the addition of the tickets for the train, which tied in real nicely at the end with the punched holes. The boy Santa mentioned needed humility had 'LEARN' punched on his ticket, the main girl with the Christmas Spirit had "Leadership", Billy (whose greatest gift was friendship) had a ticket that went from 'DEPEND ON' to 'RELY ON' to 'COUNT ON' as friends should do for each other, and our 'hero boy' had BELIEVE, which is the main theme throughout the film version; 'Seeing is Believing'. Of course the ghost was an addition as well and I still have a hard time figuring him out. Is he the ghost of Christmas past?

Is he a guardian angel just for the Polar Express? Or is he there to help reiterate as he says ‘Seeing is Believing’? A few of the children characters from the train were either left out or changed too, but this change isn’t so substantial.

One of the most amazing aspects of this film was the special effects and sounds and overall pictures! I was so impressed with the believability of the characters, the sounds effects relating to individual objects in the film; jingle bells, music through the loud speakers, the sound of the train, voices sounding far away and close up when necessary, hearing the ticket flopping in the wind, and the music when the crew were dancing on the train. I was also so happy to see that every picture in the book was represented in the movie in one scene or another. Overall I thought the movie did an absolute fantastic job representing the book with the plot and pictures of the book.