

**When Books Meet Movies:
The Interplay Between Entertainment Companies and Education**

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CHAPTER 1: Problem Statement and Significance

It's hard for me to think about Harry Potter without picturing Daniel Radcliffe, in fact, it is impossible. This association, though almost unconscious, has changed the educational landscape, particularly as it pertains to book-to-film adaptations. In the family genre alone, 73 book-to-film titles have come out since 1982 grossing over \$7,526,815,755 dollars cumulatively ("Family-Children's Book Adaptation," 2013, 1). *Harry Potter* and its subsequent sequels have each grossed upwards of \$900,00,000 each with historical opening weekends that are unparalleled in worldwide and international box office ("All Time Box Office Records," 2013, 1).

Similarly, while the demise of the book industry is said to be fast approaching, children's book sales have become the fastest-growing segment of the publishing industry with a 12% increase in revenue in 2012 (Carpenter, "Market in Children's Books Thrives," 1). Not surprisingly, those books that boosted that economy—namely J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* saga, and Suzanne Collins *Hunger Games* trilogy—have been made into very successful film franchises (Carpenter, 1).

This trend however, is an interesting one and the exact reason I am interested in my thesis topic. Long gone are the days where books were released and allowed to live on bookshelves in stores for months or even years before being considered as a movie title. Now, one of, if not the most common trend in Hollywood is to search upcoming book titles and purchase the rights to the story before the book is even released in stores. There are teams of interns who have read the next

best-seller months before it has been released in hopes of snatching the rights to the movie. This trickle down effect has and will continue to shape the publishing industry.

Today, as one peruses the aisles of Barnes and Noble (or more accurately searches Amazon's online bookshelves), covers of books are decorated with familiar actors. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* will now forever be adorned with the faces of Logan Lerman, Ezra Miller, and Emma Watson, as will *Ramona and Beezus* be tattooed with Joey King's and Selena Gomez's smiles. The imagination that used to be afforded to a reader is imprinted with these subconscious caricatures before opening the first page.

So what? Why does this matter to the educational and media landscapes that fueled this change? What does it mean to the present and future of learning in the 21st century media saturated environment we live in? How has this trend shaped curriculum and therefore the imaginations of those learning it? And how have I proposed to examine it?

Through my research, I looked at these questions through in-depth research, interviews, and practice. I began by gathering an understanding of what an adaptation is, what children's literature is, and what trends persist in the children's book-to-film adaptation genre. Next I examined case studies of two of the most successful book-to-film franchises, *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games* to understand what contributed to their success and how they have changed the landscape of book-to-film adaptations. After I looked at these examples, I examined two companies which have specialized in this genre, Scholastic and Walden Media,

so that I could gain both a film and publishing perspective. The following section I looked at both child development and media theories relevant to this topic on a broader scale. Finally, I explored what has affectionately been deemed Generation M, the Internet Generation (Lyons, “Examining Generation Z,” 1). Once I looked at the changes that separate these children, those born from the early 1990s through the present, I then examined media literacy on a broader scale to further contextualize why an understanding of book to film transitions is important, and the ways in which its premise may become a “teachable moment” for children, parents and teachers (Lyons, 1).

After studying these facets of my larger problem, I created some context by pitching my own children’s book-to-film adaptation. In this process, I determined audience, marketability, book sales, traction, and place in the market while also developing story, characters, budget, and presentation. The book I chose, *Spy School*, has rights that have not been purchased by a company and it was my hope to take this work and actually apply it in a real life setting by taking it to a company—Walden Media—and going through all the requirements one does when trying to get a book made into a movie.

Through research and practice, I examined the trends that have persisted in the last three decades and accounted for some of the reasons why they have grown so dramatically of recent and continue to expand. I also attempted to account for the ramifications of these changing times and how they are being relegated in Hollywood, education, and the crossover of both.

CHAPTER 2: Book-to-Film Adaptations

I. What is CHILDREN'S LITERATURE?

Children's literature is best described as a grouping of books made with a child audience in mind. In the history of children's literature however, this definition has shifted and grown to accommodate different cultures' understandings of what childhood was within the context of society. One of the earliest definitions of children's literature was published by Harvey Darton in which he claimed that it was specifically, "Works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure, and not primarily to teach them, nor solely to make them good..." (Darton, 1932, 175). A more recent way of defining children's literature can be found in Perry Nodelman's book, *The Hidden Adult*, in which he writes, "Just as popular literature is whatever is popular with a lot of readers, children's literature is whatever literature children happen to read" (Nodelman, 1992, 4). After he makes such an over-generalized statement, however, he laments at how unproductive it is. He continues in saying, "Children's literature is not so much what children read as what producers hope children will read" (1992, 4). In Roger Sale's book, *Fairy Tales and After*, he, too, concludes, "Everyone knows what children's literature is until asked to define it" (Sale, 1979, 1). In looking to gain an understanding of what constitutes children's literature, it is valuable to look at its role in history and how it has evolved.

The Middle Ages were not very keen on providing children with their own separate form of literature (Nodelman, 1992, 82). That which existed

was never explicitly demarcated as for children specifically and was mostly made up of poems and literature that existed with simpler language, concepts for a younger audience, or a child protagonist. Additionally, the first texts for a specific child-centered audience were books by a devout group of Christians aiming to keep children away from sin in a language that was accessible and directed at them. Today, John Newbery's books are often cited as the first books truly for a children's audience. After Newbery, books such as *The Grimm's Fairy Tales* and other collections of stories began to gain traction as authors such as Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm paved the way for marketing specifically for children (1992, 84). Today there exist millions of books with a specific child audience; however, there remains no clear demarcation of what exactly differentiates these books.

Although children's literature is aimed at its child consumer, much of what exists today and has been pushed into the marketplace is what adults think children want and should have (Nodelman, 1992, 101). Additionally, though some books are written for the child audience, they gain significant following in the adult literary world, such as in the case with the *Harry Potter* series. Since children do not have the means of purchasing and/or selecting what is presented to them, they rely on parents, teachers, librarians, and other adults to provide them with the literature that makes up this body of work. In this way, adults have been able to continually regulate that which might expose children to variety and life. Through organizations that fight to get books banned, bookstores that place some books on display and others in

the back catalog, and parents who encourage their children to read books with certain moral values, characters, or reputations, children are being imprinted with the ideologies that define a society (1992, 101). Since different cultures have varying views of what children should be exposed to and understand, there are marked differences between those books that are considered “children’s literature” in, for example, India, versus England and/or North America. As children’s literature continues to persist as a growing genre with a specific audience, its definition continues to be blurred and changed to meet the demands of that which society define childhood.

Lastly, children’s literature as a genre has become interlinked with the commodification of childhood (Schor, 2004, 18). Children have become buyers at an early age and the literature that is being produced for them has therefore been created as a marketing ploy to bring in young people through advertising. Even if it is parents who have the direct purchasing power, children and the “nag factor” (a phrase used to describe children’s begging for a specific commodity) have become a central concern of marketers in every aspect of children’s products, including (but certainly not limited to), the literature that they have access to and are being advertised (2004, 18). It is this influence that defines the current state of children’s literature and one that will certainly continue into the future.

II. What is film ADAPTATION?

In terms of literary work, Merriam Webster defines adaptation as “a composition rewritten into new form” (“Adaptation”, 2013, 1). This

definition spans plays, songs, and a whole gamut of possibilities, including, but not limited to, film adaptation. In looking at film adaptation there are two mediums that one must consider and the trouble in defining adaptation comes in if it should be looked at in terms of the film or written medium.

George Bluestone was at the forefront of adaptation studies. In his book *Novels Into Film*, he attempted to tackle some of the ideas that plague film adaptation, "We discover, therefore, in film versions of the novel, an inevitable abandonment of "novelistic" elements. This abandonment is so severe that, in a strict sense, the new creation has little resemblance to the original" (Bluestone, 1957. vii). The written words have the opportunity to evoke dreams, memories, conceptual consciousness, and tropes, which film cannot (1957. vii). Likewise in film, the visual interpretation of time and space are explored in a completely different manner than in the novel. Bluestone therefore concluded that, "In these terms, the film-maker merely treats the novel as raw material and ultimately creates his own unique structure" (1957, vii). It is this understanding that has funneled further explication of the film adaptation.

Robert Stam is another critical voice in the adaptation discussion. In his critical approach he states, "Adaptations redistribute energies and intensities, provokes flows and displacements; the linguistic energy of literary writing turns into the audio-visual-kinetic-performative energy of the adaptation, in an amorous exchange of textual fluids" (Cartmell, 2010, 13). In this way, adaptation may be thought of as an interdisciplinary pursuit

in which the merging of two distinctively different mediums collide to provide a completely new one. “The novel has a single material of expression, the written word, whereas the film has at least five tracks: moving photographic image, phonetic sound, music, noises, and written materials” (2010, 25). The film has the capacity to create in ways that the novel does not and vice versa, one concerned with the visual and auditory mediums and the other a more cerebral practice.

An important facet of adaptation studies, then, becomes this notion of what the text says versus what it means. While novels provide the necessary ingredients in order to spark a reader’s imagination, what is assumed and/or left up to interpretation is much greater than that in film. Whereas reading and writing are arts of telling, film’s motto is often said to be, “show don’t tell.” “The ambition of film adaptations are not always motivated by the text but rather by the paratext(s), one of which is the economic potential in producing a hypertext which both supplants and returns readers to the hypotext hypo or hyper?” (Cartmell, 2010, 16-17). Therefore, adaptation becomes a process and not a final product from one medium to the next. Jonathan Gray concludes, “both reading and the text are a continual journey *through*, a continuance of motion, and while there might be determinate moments, there are always potentially more determinate moments to come” (2010, 17-18). Adaptation’s process, then, is one that continues the scope of that which has been adapted into a new work. “Each new text we encounter

carries with it the potential to expand, or otherwise modify, our knowledge of its genre's semantic and syntax" (2010, 18).

As adaptations garner critical success or terrible reviews, one thing that is certain is that they provide some added understanding of the original text. No longer does the book, which has been adapted for the screen, stand alone; it is forever tied into its filmic interpretation. In this way, then, adaptation bolsters the creative process.

Star discourse is another increasingly popular mode of intervention into adaptation in recognition that stars affect the circulation of film properties as much when adaptations are made as when they fail to be made, and reading the adaptation through the other performances of a star or stars generates new possibilities in adaptation studies, just as reading through costume or soundtrack uncovers new connections and hidden legacies (Cartmell, 2010, 19).

While the Harry Potter books once allowed their readers to envision what the boy with a lightning bolt scar looked like, Daniel Radcliffe is now emblazoned in his place as the only Harry Potter in the mind's eye of many readers. Similarly, one could place Leonardo DiCaprio as Romeo and, on a smaller scale, Joey King as Ramona. These figures get put on book covers (except in the case of *Harry Potter* which has maintained its traditional non-tie-in look) and become a part of the adaptation process that spans all the different properties tying them into one greater *thing*.

One thing adaptation is not is a realization of texts on screen or, more specifically, a copy of words into actions without creativity or interpretation. As Lois Lowry, author of *The Giver*, once said, "a good film adaptation is one that is faithful to the spirit of the book" ("Children's Books Make Movie

Magic”, 2010, 30). This however, is not necessarily a literal adaptation. Writer/director Paul Weitz notes that there is, “no point in merely translating a book to film. It should be an interpretation” (Grove, 2003, 1). Viewers of adaptations must, therefore, have different standards of what they can expect from a good adaptation than to hoping for a literal translation of the text. “I think when people start out with a fidelity model when they want the film to imitate the book they’re always going to be disappointed. They expect the experience they had reading will be the same they’ll have in the theater. But it’s two different medias. If you go into the film expecting that everything in the book will be represented on the screen, you’re going to be disappointed” (Collete, 2012, 1). Adaptations, instead, serve the purpose of reinvigorating or retelling a work in a different way, one that can never be the same as the original text, nor should it.

Adaptations introduce a different audience to a work. “At its best an adaptation on screen can re-envision a well-worn narrative for a new audience inhabiting a very different cultural environment, and their relationship to the ‘origin’ may itself change enormously...A text may well have outlived its usefulness or become too tired for contemporary tastes” (Cartmell, 2010, 23). Additionally, the scope of films is larger, contributing to this phenomenon. “If we haven’t read the adapted text but know of it by reputation, especially with classic texts, ‘we tend to experience the adaptation through the lenses of the adapted work, as a kind of palimpsest” (2010, 26). In this way, adaptations oftentimes become that which they are

adapted from, or at least, to one who might not have been exposed to the original text.

At their core, adaptations are a process that spans book to film and requires a mutually creative ebb and flow from both. The movement from text to screen changes the ways in which a story is told, understood, and remembered, and adaptations serve to give new life, new interpretations, and new meaning to stories that exist in an additional form with a different, but equally valuable, perspective.

III. Trends in BOOK-TO-FILM ADAPTATIONS

Children's book-to-film adaptations can basically be divided between pre-Harry Potter and post-Harry Potter. Certainly there are classics that were made before the 2001 release of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, including *Shrek*, *Stuart Little*, *Madeline*, *Harriet the Spy*, *The Neverending Story*, *Jumanji*, *The Babysitters Club*, and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, amongst others, but the Potter series marked serious change in this genre ("Family- Children's Book Adaptations," 2013, 1). Before *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the highest grossing films were *Stuart Little* with a lifetime gross of \$140,035,367 and an opening weekend of only \$15,018,223, and *Jumanji* with a lifetime gross of \$100,475,249 and an opening weekend of a mere \$11,084,370 (2013, 1). *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* made almost as much in its opening weekend as these films' lifetime grosses with \$90,294,621 and a lifetime gross of \$317,575,550 (2013, 1). "The hoopla that has accompanied the release of each new book and movie exceeded that of

even the most popular adult properties, raising the profile of children's books and movies to unprecedented heights. The success of the Harry Potter franchise also paved the way for an explosion of movies based on children's books over the past few years" ("Children's Books Make Movie Magic", 2010, 30). More than just shifting the financial spike in sales for these properties however, the Potter series reinvigorated this genre and brought it into the limelight.

From 1984 to 2001 when the first Potter film was released, 20 children's book-to-film adaptations were made and distributed. From 2001 to 2013, 55 films have since been made for theatrical release ("Family-Children's Book Adaptations," 2013, 1). Additionally, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* opened the door for other children's films to bring in a much larger audience base, with not only all the other Potter films bringing in even more money than the first, but also with movies such as *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* opening with \$65,556,312 and having an overall gross of \$291,710,957; *Night at the Museum* having an opening of \$30,433,781 and a lifetime gross of \$250,863,268; *Alice in Wonderland* opening with \$116,101,023 and overall bringing in upwards of \$334,191,110 (surpassing most of the Potter films); and, most recently, *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax* opening with \$70,217,070 and maintaining \$214,030,500 as an overall gross (2013, 1). These numbers are reminiscent of the trends that have persisted.

Hollywood is always hoping to build on success. If dystopian stories are doing well, as they appear to be now, everyone wants to make the next one. When *American Idol* was released, every network strove to compete with shows like *The Voice*, *The Sing-Off*, *The X Factor*, and *America's Got Talent*, springing up on other channels. When the *Twilight* craze took-off, so did vampires (in the form of *Vampire Diaries*, *True Blood*, and others). "Young adult fiction, preferably with a dystopian or supernatural twist, is the literary genre causing most buzz among publishers and film scouts as they flock to this year's London Book Fair," recalls an article written ten years after the first Potter film's release (Dawtre, 2011, 1). Since *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* brought children's literature to the forefront of Hollywood's radar, studios have been trying to find similar success in other children's books with the same themes. "Ever since *Harry Potter* burst out of the children's section to become a four-quadrant phenomenon, and the *Twilight* series reached beyond its core crowd of teenage girls, everyone has been trying to spot the next youth franchise with the potential to cross the generation gap on the page and on screen" (2011, 1). The attention that children's books garnered after these franchises took off has since completely changed the way in which these properties were acquired.

It's important to note that *Harry Potter*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and other book-to-film adaptations such as *Holes*, *Bridge to Terabithia*, and *Charlotte's Web*, had already gained widespread acclaim and fan-bases from their publications because of brand recognition. These films, therefore,

reaped the benefit of their already popular titles that came with built in recognition and fans. Today, however, most children's books are received in manuscript and very few children's books' rights are available by the time the actual book breaks into the marketplace (Beer, 2002, 13). "Everybody wants that backlist treasure, but for the most part, if we like something we are looking at it in manuscript. To wait for something to hit big sales is usually too late, unless it's some bizarre, quirky surprise. Everyone is keeping such an eye out for material that you have to jump on it the minute you see it," says Lola Bubbosh, a literary consultant at Miramax Films (2002, 13). Companies in Hollywood have literary agents whose specific job is to aggregate these manuscripts and search coming soon lists to find titles that may be of interests. "For a while, everyone wanted the next *Harry Potter*...but there is now high interest in children's books in general running from frontlist to backlist, with everybody looking for the next hot thing. We get more than 100 requests over the transom every week about our books," says Joan Rosen, Vice President and Director of Subsidiary Rights for HarperCollins Children's Books (Maughan, 2003, 21). Film companies, have therefore, begun to forge very profitable and mutually beneficial relationships with different publishers so that they might obtain the rights to the properties ahead of others.

It is becoming increasingly hard and unpopular for publishers to keep the film and television rights for their properties in this climate (Beer, 2002, 12). Still, as most publishers don't have the proper infrastructure to support

these rights, they too recognize the benefits of having film and television studios pick them up. Annie Eaton, a fiction publisher at Random House Children's Books speaks to this phenomenon in saying, "If we have a really saleable property, we actively go out and do a big pitch in several film and television companies" (2002, 13). Though a publisher cannot do this for all its titles, they maintain relationships with people at specific companies to have easy access to do short pitches on other titles that might not be as spectacular or expansive. Rosie Alison, Head of Children's Development at Heyday Films explains,

Big film and television companies are keen to establish good working relationships. From our point of view it is fantastic to have as much cooperation from publishers as possible...Publishers have the best knowledge of what is on their lists and are wonderfully enthusiastic about their products. Good contacts with editors can be the best way to find out what is good (2002, 13).

In some instances, this has even provided publishers with the reverse effect, as in the case with *Albie* at HarperCollins which was born out of a television series tie-in. HarperCollins' Editorial Director of Picture Books, Sue Buswell, goes as far as saying she probably would have turned down *Albie* if there had not been a television show already in place backing it, showing the incredible effects that television has the capacity to have on the publication of books as well. While these relationships are still new and burgeoning, one thing is clear: they are not going away. Bubbosh at Miramax concludes in saying, "The film world is "going bananas" over children's books.... Where publishers have retained the rights, they are pitching to film companies in a way that is helpful to both them and to us. I'd say it's on a good path" (2002, 13).

As publishers have their eye to the next literary craze, they also have been learning what to look for in light of the film industry. Robb Pearlman, the Subsidiary Rights Manager, Domestic Markets and Brand Licensing at Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing exclaims,

What people want is really running the gamut, depending on the production company or studio. Some studios were overrun with stories about boy wizards and dragons and now they want something new. Others are looking for edgy things and some want only squeaky-clean properties. I feel like the interest in our books has increased overall, but I've also been more proactive in making more contacts. I field anywhere from 10-20 queries a day (Maughan, 2003, 21).

While this remains true, others have noted different trends. Jane Startz, previously the co-founder of Scholastic Films and currently the principal at Jane Startz Productions, says that with the steady rise in interest, she recognized very specific developments.

The big news is girls. There is really a growing opportunity for the young girl audiences. Studios now see that projects aimed at that audience are a pretty safe bet. They (studios) are appreciating literary properties more and more and are looking for the next *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* as much as the next Harry Potter" (2003, 22).

She cites *The Cheetah Girls* (inspired by Deborah Gregory's book series) as another example in this genre, but also speaks to how this property was doubly profitable because of its tie-ins and second wind in the direct-to-home video market for good, family home viewing. She sees these types of projects as mutually beneficial for publishers because this audience is one that has proven to engage with relatable characters on multiple platforms (2003, 22). For instance, both *Lizzie McGuire* and the Olsen Twins have spawned top selling books from their shows' success.

Another trend is towards books being used in the classroom. When Walden Media was launched, their aim was to create films with educational substance. “The first thing we look at is whether the book is being taught in schools,” said President and Co-Founder, Micheal Flaherty (Maughan, 2003, 22). They have found at Walden that, “educators have begun to embrace the power of movies to stimulate young readers’ interest in books rather than detract from it” (“Children’s Books Make Movie Magic”, 2010, 30). Randy Testa, a former teacher who now serves as Walden’s Vice President of Education and Professional Development, exclaims,

When we started out about 10 years ago, we would exhibit at national conferences, and teachers were leery about book adaptations...They wondered if kids would read the book if movie versions were available.... We’ve (now) got some really good data about what happens to one of these books before, during, and after the movies come out...Movies are a way to get kids—especially reluctant readers—excited about books...We say read it before you see it (2010, 30).

In the same vein, Hollywood is often looking for value stories, ones that feature people working together for a common purpose or ones that feature conflict resolution in non-violent ways or highlight characters that defy traditional societal roles. This emphasis on education and good values has provided an additional means of marketing products as companies seek to provide parents and teachers with the notion that their films might provide educational messages, themes, and growth as well as an encouragement to read.

In addition to this educational focus, another common thread in children’s book-to-film adaptations is towards a more modern, quirky depth

of story and characters. At Nickelodeon Movies they maintain, “Our credo is real people in extraordinary situations...we’re looking for a world that will translate onscreen and stories that are character-driven...we like irreverent voices. We are a contemporary brand, so you won’t see us doing a lot of classic” (Maughan, 2003, 23). They cite *Lemony Snicket’s A Series of Unfortunate Events* as an example of one of their projects that was so appealing because it takes children’s literature and flips it on its head. Julia Pistor, Senior Vice President at Nickelodeon Movies, concludes, “In a way, it’s anything goes. People used to think of family films as quiet classics, but Harry Potter blew the genre apart, opening the door for more high-concept motion pictures” (2003, 23). In this way also, studios have become more open-minded to the possibility of reaping the benefits of the success of one of these films and therefore are willing to try different things. Gotham Group’s Julie Kane-Ritsch also explains, “Studios and producers are more open to book projects for animation,” a fairly recent development then that has since completely blossomed into the wonders of Pixar and other companies (2003, 23). These trends continue to persist and change as the industry understands what does and doesn’t work in adaptation.

Though not necessarily a trend, an important facet to adaptation that isn’t as prevalent with children’s literature, is that it must appeal to adults as well. “Hollywood is especially keen on children’s books that will hold the interests of adults too” (Maughan, 2002, 80). In this way, books that have garnered significant literary praise such as a Newbery Honor Award or an

American Library Association recognition provide good publicity for parents to cling to. Audience marks the main difference between book and film as books can cater to a much more nuanced crowd. "When I'm pitching titles, producers are looking for a text that eight-year-olds will enjoy and fourteen-year-olds won't find too babyish...They want something with very broad appeal, and we publish books much more specifically than that," says Brian Kelher at Harcourt (2002, 80). Still, with the continued success of the genre, producers aren't limiting themselves to these wide appeal flicks.

In addition to the relationship between publishers and movie studios and producers that options these properties and dictate the overall trends, another positive relationship that is being maintained in Hollywood is that between authors, screenwriters, and directors which funnels good adaptations as opposed to ones that might not be given the same care and truth of purpose. In many instances today, the authors are being considered to write the screenplays, if not the final versions than at least the first drafts of the story, so that their voice and message is translated. For Walden Media, this has been of extreme importance, often going to the source when they can to try to integrate their ideas. "One way to ensure that movies remain faithful to the original books is to involve the authors in the production. For instance, Louis Sachar did the screenplay for *Holes*, and C.S. Lewis's estate has approval over the *Chronicles of Narnia* series" ("Children's Books Make Movie Magic", 2010, 30). Startz also proclaims, "My real allegiance is always to the author. They offer a unique perspective on the material even if they

don't agree with my vision for it. I wouldn't want to do something that an author really didn't like" (Maughan, 2002, 80). In forging this kind of relationship, fans are also nurtured because they will buy into the adaptation if it is "written" by the author, as they believe it is being presented in a way that is faithful to the story. *The Hunger Games* was a testament to this as fans proclaimed that author Suzanne Collins wrote the book and the screenplay and so she actualized how the events would play out in the movie. This trend continues to persist as fans continue to support the realness that comes with this kind of relationship between book and film.

As movie studios continue their tireless search for the next blockbuster, it is clear that children's book-to-film adaptation is as alive and competitive as ever. "The growth has been exponential. Success breed success. People are realizing that this is a viable commercial enterprise," proclaims Startz (Maughan, 2002, 80). So long as these films continue to make a splash at the box office, the genre will continue to grow in this ever plugged in generation where the norm is towards all things digitally inspired.

CHAPTER 3: Case Studies

Harry Potter and *The Hunger Games* are two examples of book-to-film adaptations that have completely revolutionized the genre. *Harry Potter* was a catalyst for an entire industry shift and *The Hunger Games* has capitalized on the success of its predecessor to continue the trend towards four-quadrant children's book-to-film adaptations. Through looking at these two examples, we can see the growing scope of the genre, the capabilities of a book and its movie adaptation, and the educational and entertainment principles that guide the most successful adaptations of their times.

IV. Harry Potter

Harry Potter holds a lot of records, but the most remarkable one is that it is the first of its kind. While other young adult series have since come out and made a splash in the book-to-film adaptation sphere, Harry Potter was at the forefront of this phenomenon.

In a study commissioned last year by Scholastic, Yankelovick, a market research firm, reported that 51 percent of the 500 kids aged 5 to 17 polled said they did not read books for fun before they started reading the series. A little over three-quarters of them said Harry Potter had made them interested in reading other books (Rich, 2007, 1).

Remarkably, JK Rowling was a rather unknown writer who got denied by multiple publishers, claiming her manuscript was too long and/or too slow (Italie, 2007, 1). In 1996, Bloomsbury Press signed her for a meager \$4,000 dollars and “a warning not to expect to get rich from writing children's books” (2007, 1). Rowling, however, persisted.

Contrary to the poor reception from British publishers, Scholastic editor Arthur A. Levine had other ideas about the books' potentials for success and acquired the rights for \$105,000 (Italie, 2007, 1). The book went on to be published in Britain in 1997, but only after Rowling changed her first name to initials so that she would be able to attract boy readers. "In July 1998, the *Guardian* in London noted that Rowling was more popular than John Grisham and declared 'The Harry Potter books have become a phenomenon.' At the time, '*Philosopher's Stone* had sold 70,000 copies'" (2007, 1). The book was then released in the United States later that year after being renamed to "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" and was promoted with buttons and a meager five-city book tour. "By January 1999, the AP (Associated Press) was calling Potter a sensation... In July 1999, the "p-word" appeared in long articles in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Publishers Weekly*, and the *Times*" (2007, 1). Though its initial print run was only 50,000 books, the book is now published in 74 languages and the series has sold over 450 million books worldwide (Scholastic, 2013, 1). Every Harry Potter book has been a number one *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestseller (2013, 1). Worldwide sales of the Harry Potter series is said to exceed 450 million, a number that has conquered both adult and children audiences (as well as everything in between) (2013, 1). Harry Potter boosted Young Adult fiction into the limelight. "It doesn't feel odd anymore for adults to be seen reading children's books. ... Potter has made a big difference," remarks a buyer for an independent bookstore in Seattle (Italie, 2007, 1). These

remarkable feats contribute to the phenomenon that made Harry Potter more than just a book to its fans.

The Harry Potter series had the good fortune of launching during the Internet boom. Because of this, fans got to create a world of their own through their own launch sites that allowed the magic to continue into an Internet explosion. Though Warner Brothers originally protested the sites with numerous lawsuits, they quickly realized that the fans were actually promulgating their brand (Aquino, 2011, 1). “When Harry Potter first came out the Internet was just getting started and big corporations didn’t understand how it worked... They’re finally starting to realize that it’s important to allow customers to personalize the way they experience a brand” (2011, 1). Rowling spent three years in between book 4 and 5, which created media frenzy as fans started messaging boards, blogs, and even went so far as to write their own fan fiction (Italie, 2007, 1). “I think the reason that authors write books about J.K. Rowling’s works and readers buy them is because being a fan of Harry Potter is about much more than just reading and enjoying Ms. Rowling’s book series,” remarks Jennifer Heddle, an editor at Pocket Books, a division of Simon & Schuster (2007, 1). Even though both the book and movie series have come to a close, the series lives on through videogames, blogs, message boards, conferences, fan-fiction, theme parks, and the continued interests of fans.

When something has staying power, it’s because it strikes some kind of fundamental chord...Kids identify with Harry Potter and his adventures; they identify with his empowerment. It’s all very circular. We feel empowered by making a phenomenon out of something like

Potter and Potter itself addresses the very idea of empowerment” (2007, 1).

Potter not only promotes literacy amongst the millions of people worldwide that have fallen in love with the stories, but also creativity and imagination as people keep the magic alive through their own creations. Today, the Harry Potter book series sits third in all-time best sellers of all time, second only to “The Bible” and “The Thoughts of Chairman Mao” (*Observer*, 2005, 1).

The movies have, remarkably, done even better than the books. “You go out there, you try and make a movie that your mother wants to see, as well as you want to see, and your father wants to see, and your brother wants to see. It’s hard!” claims Nikki Finke, Editor and Founder of the entertainment news site DeadlineHollywood.com (Wang, 2011, 1). Harry Potter, however, managed to gracefully conquer this task through all of its movies. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* grossed \$90,294,621 in its opening weekend and since has garnered \$317,575,550 in domestic box office gross and \$657,179,821 in foreign sales equaling an astounding \$974,755,371 worldwide total lifetime gross (“Family-Children’s Book Adaptation,” 1). It was nominated for three 2001 Academy Awards and was the number one film of 2001. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* did similarly well with an opening weekend of \$88,357,488 and total worldwide gross of \$878,979,634, making it the 4th biggest film of 2002, staying in theaters for 24.4 weeks. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* brought in \$93,687,367 and a total worldwide lifetime gross of \$796,688,549. *Azkaban* also got nominated for two Oscars in 2004 (“Family-Children’s Book

Adaptation," 1). The trajectory continued with *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, which was nominated for one Oscar with an opening weekend of \$102,685,961 and a total worldwide gross of \$896,911,078. The numbers continued to rise with *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* with an opening weekend of \$77,108,414 and a total worldwide gross of \$939,885,929, the 5th best film of 2007 ("Family-Children's Book Adaptation," 1). In 2009, *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince* brought another Oscar nomination, an opening weekend of \$77,835,727, and a worldwide gross of \$934,416,487 ("Family-Children's Book Adaptation," 1). With the last book, the producers decided to spread their luck over two films contributing to unbelievable box office success. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1* was nominated for two Academy Awards and also the largest opening weekend for a Potter film bringing in \$125,017,372 ("Family-Children's Book Adaptation," 1). Domestically, the film brought in \$295,983,305 and internationally brought in \$660,416,406 to a grand total of \$956,416,406 ("Family-Children's Book Adaptation," 1). While an unbelievable gross for the 8th film in a series, the 9th film was the centerpiece of Harry Potter's success. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2* was nominated for three Academy Awards, brought in \$169,189,427 during its opening weekend and trumped all the other movies with \$381,011,219 in domestic lifetime gross and \$947,100,000 in foreign gross bringing the total worldwide total lifetime gross to \$1,328,111,219 ("Family-Children's Book Adaptation," 1). The film is accredited as the number one children's book

adaptation (in sales), the number one fantasy live action, the number one worldwide opening weekend, the number one foreign opening weekend, the number one opening day gross, and the number one single day gross (amongst many other accolades) ("Family-Children's Book Adaptation," 1). The film franchise has grossed an unbelievable amount that has contributed to the \$15 billion dollar brand behind the Potter craze.

Though there are a lot of remarkable ways in which Rowling and her team harnessed the undying love of Potter and his adventures, a few in particular contribute to the boom that has made it the household name it is today. "It's popular because of marketing." Richard Allington, president of the International Reading Association, agrees that movies, fast-food tie-ins, and toys give a book extra kid credentials. "When you commercialize a book, the audience expands.... I can't say that's a bad thing" (Hallet, 2005, 1). First and foremost, Bloomsbury and Scholastic (the publishing and distribution arms of the series) created buzz that surrounded not only the story, but also the release. "The Potter promotion has "made reading an event with the glitz of a movie premiere...it's an amazing experiment of how we'll deal with books in the 21st century," says Kevin Smokler, editor of *Bookmark Now*, an anthology of late-teenage-to-30ish writers discussing the future of literature (2005, 1). He continues by noting that if we were to incorporate books into pop culture more instead of segregating them into something refined and rarified, literature might be more accessible in the way that Harry Potter is (2005, 1). Each book was released at midnight so that the story wasn't ruined

for anyone. “Starting with the fourth book, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, crowds of people wearing black robes, ties, and round-frame glasses began showing up at bookstores for midnight release parties in 2000” (Aquino, 2011, 1). Additionally, the pre-order craze that surrounded Potter contributed to its craze, with over 700,000 copies ordered prior to the July 8th, 2000 release (and climbing with each additional book) (2011, 1). The seventh and final book in the series is reported to have been the fastest-selling book in history by *The New York Times* (2011, 1). Though these strategic releases seem organic and fan-driven, they actually were carefully crafted means of engaging fans in the craze.

Rowling was also very careful in how the brand was perceived, most famously turning down a merchandising deal with the McDonalds Corporation (2011, 1). “J.K. Rowling went on record stating that ‘fast-food kids meals would be her worst nightmare,’ said Diane Nelson executive vice president of global brand management for Warner Brothers” (2011, 1). Since fast-food tie-ins are an extremely lucrative business move in merchandising, Rowling’s strong personal opposition contributed to an even greater appreciation for her and her work.

At the end of the day, while Potter has done phenomenally well economically, its greatest success is that it got people excited about reading again. “Besides breaking publishing and movie ticket records, Harry Potter’s greatest achievement, say parents and teachers, has been to persuade young people to pick up a book and read it” (Aquino, 2011, 1). The Federation of

Children's Book Groups released figures showing that 59% of United Kingdom children think that the books have improved their reading skills and 48% say the books are why they read more (Hallet, 2005, 1). "It's broken the rules...Kids who hadn't picked up a book in years unless they'd been forced to were reading the series and then asking me for more books like it. For the first time for them, a book was as exciting as a video game," claims Cathy Denman, a middle school media specialist in Florida who chairs the young adult booklist for the International Reading Association (2005, 1). The books became an insider's clubs; even if children had gone and seen the movies, they inevitably were forced to read the books or else they were missing out (2005, 1). Harry Potter has even been accredited as a literary status symbol for youth.

What Rowling has managed to do, with the help of avid fans and clever marketers, is bring attention to the fact that children are not a lost cause. The reading crisis in America is real---and too big for Harry Potter alone to conquer. But the lesson of his success is clear: Twenty-first-century youngsters may live in an era where a mouse is a more natural tool than a pencil, and flashy images are just a remote-control click away, but they can still enjoy reading an old-fashioned book" (2005, 1).

Harry Potter sparked change. After its critical and commercial success, media companies, educators, parents, and children alike turned to their bookshelves looking for the next Harry Potter. While the series has ended, the brand and the phenomenon surrounding it live on. With a theme park memorializing the world of Harry Potter in Orlando, Florida; websites, blogs, and games being created and maintained every day; and new forms of Harry Potter merchandise entering the marketplace through various channels, the

boy wizard continues to share his magic through his books, movies, and other properties. “In a way that was previously rare for books, Harry Potter entered the pop-culture consciousness. The movies heightened the fervor, spawning video games and collectible figurines. That made it easier for kids who thought reading was for geeks to pick up a book” (Rich 2007, 1). Harry Potter, in essence, made reading cool again.

The entire children’s book sector has been invigorated by the achievements of the teenage mage: applications to boarding schools have rocketed in the wake of the HP phenomenon; EFL teachers claim that the texts are ideal workbooks for those wishing to improve their grasp of the mother tongue, as do parents of children with learning difficulties; owls are proving increasingly popular as household pets, much to the dismay of Animal Rights activists; the locations used in the movies are proving popular with tourists; and the Potter vocabulary of “Quidditch,” “Muggles,” “Gryffindor,” “Slytherin,” “Hogwarts,” et al, is now part of the vernacular (Brown, 2005, 1).

The lightning bolt has become a discernable cultural phenomenon with the likes of Nike’s swoosh and McDonald’s golden arches. “The boy wizard is Britain’s biggest cultural export since the Beatles and James Bond” (2005, 1). The entire industry surrounding book-to-film adaptations was reinvigorated with its success and it has spawned the mutually beneficial relationships that are now in place today. *Harry Potter* allowed series like the *Hunger Games* to succeed in a genre that would otherwise never have been able to accommodate such challenging and complex material.

V. **Hunger Games**

Similar to its predecessor *Harry Potter*, the *Hunger Games* was a bottom-up success that gained traction from grassroots campaigns and fan devotion. Suzanne Collin’s book was released on September 14, 2008 with just 200,000 books in print.

Though a humble beginning, the books quickly picked up traction and, in 2010, had already sold 4.3 million more copies (Schutte, 2012, 1). In 2011, this number doubled to 9.2 million books sold (2012, 1). Though steadily climbing, especially for a Young Adult novel, the event that allowed these books sales to jump precipitously was the movie adaptations of these stories.

Currently, Scholastic has more than 50 million copies of the original three books of *The Hunger Games* trilogy in print and digital formats in the United States. Of them, 23 million are *The Hunger Games*, 14 million are *Catching Fire*, and 13 are *Mockingjay* (Scholastic, 2013, 1). Outside of America, the *Hunger Games* trilogy has gained international traction. The book has, to date, been sold in 56 territories and has been translated into 51 language (2013, 1). Additionally, another 2 million copies of the three books are in print in a movie-related format in the United States (2013, 1). The books have spent more than 200 consecutive weeks (over three years) on *The New York Times* bestseller list since its publication in 2008 (2013, 1). It also consistently reappears on both USA Today and *Publisher's Weekly's* bestseller lists (2013, 1). Additionally, Amazon has named Suzanne Collins “the bestselling author of all-time on its Kindle e-reader” (Lewis, 2012, 1).

The books have received critical praise as well. The first book was named the Kirkus Best Young Adult Book of the Year Award in 2008 and it was credited by the ALA as one of the Best Books for Young Adults in 2009. Additionally it has garnered a lot of regional and national awards and book list recommendations that have spanned all three books (Scholastic, 2013, 1).

With the roaring success of the book franchise, it was a no-brainer for film companies to poach this property. Still, like its book-to-film predecessor franchise, Harry Potter, both “were well established and hugely successful before the movies ever came on the horizon,” notes Ellie Berger, president of Scholastic trade publishing, which is responsible for both of the series in the United States (Raugust, 2012, 1). She also notes, however, that the buildup to the movie release brings in new fans and helps the books sales. “We get good placement in stores and the buzz from the movie leads to a bump in sales,” says Berger (2012, 1). At Scholastic, the fourth-quarter book sales experienced extreme growth.

Additionally, the release of the movie was a mutually beneficial avenue for all, not only Scholastic and Lionsgate (the film company behind the movies), but also, in particular, Barnes and Nobles. “For *The Hunger Games*, movie studio Lionsgate partnered with Barnes and Noble for in-store events and product giveaways, such as complimentary tickets to advance screenings and free-with-purchase *Hunger Games* Nook books to customers who bought a Nook device” (Raugust, 2012, 1). The marketing campaign for *The Hunger Games* movie began with the book series, particularly through these in-store deals. Barnes and Nobles began pushing the book four months before the movies release and created displays with t-shirts, memorabilia, journals, and other collectibles (2012, 1). The interplay between the book sales and the movie release allows for a much wider reach to its audience, especially in this Young Adult genre where children are visiting book stores and drawn to the tie-ins in addition to the actual book.

While Barnes and Nobles pushed the book to its consumers through their deal with Lionsgate, other retailers also got behind the craze in their own ways. Hot Topic, Target, Wal-Mart, Claire's Nordstrom, and Fred Meyer are just some of the other brands that have collaborated on big children's franchise book-to-film adaptations (Raugust, 2012, 1). Toys R Us hosted DVD release parties and featured its merchandise in their 'tweens sections (2012, 1). Adrienne O'Hara, a Toys R Us spokesperson however, still brings it back to the books, "Bringing in the actual books has been and is part of our merchandising plan...to support the launch of the *Hunger Games* merchandise at Toys R Us, we cross-merchandised the licensed products with the books, and they sold very well" (2012, 1). *The Hunger Games* book series therefore established a mutually beneficial relationship that both catapulted its own sales and that of its impending film adaptation. The reason that *The Hunger Games* was able to leverage itself in this way however, is almost inextricably tied into the ways in which the movie handles the book.

The Hunger Games movie was produced by Nina Jacobsen, a veteran Hollywood producer in the book-to-film space (Werris, 2012, 6). Jacobsen worked as the former President of the Walt Disney Motion Picture Group overseeing major franchises such as *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In 2007, she left to start her own company, Color Force, which has since produced *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and its sequel *Roderick Rules* (2012, 6). Though multiple producers went after *The Hunger Games*, Jacobsen won over Collins through her work ethic, but also because Collins "appreciated that Kinney's voice had remained intact in the *Wimpy Kid* films" (2012, 6). Jacobsen understands the importance of the books, from both

the perspective of a film producer and a huge fan of the books. Jacobsen chose Lionsgate Entertainment as the studio that would do the production because she “felt they really understood what we were trying to do... It was the first YA book they had optioned, and it was an important asset to them, not just a piece of development, but also something they were excited about from the beginning. We all saw eye to eye creatively and agreed it should be a faithful adaptation,” recalls Jacobsen (2012, 6).

Though some properties with sensitive topics similar to *The Hunger Games* often age-up their characters or glamorize and glorify the brutality and story, Jacobsen was determined to find the balance and maintain the author’s intent (Werris, 2012, 6). “When you’re younger and you see something that really speaks to you, it’s indelible in a way that’s not the same as when you’re an adult. So I’ll always love reading books and making movies that resonate with young people,” remarks Jacobsen (2012, 7). This precedence will transcend all three book-to-film adaptations as she is set to produce them all while Collins will continue to develop the scripts, having written the first draft of this film and collaborated with the other authors to write the final ones.

With all of the careful considerations that were taken to select the best cast, crew, and marketing for the film, it is no surprise that in its opening weekend, the movie brought in over \$155 million (Collette, 2012, 1). As of this writing, it has grossed \$408,010,692 and \$278,522,598 in foreign sales to a grand total of \$686,533,290 worldwide box office (“Family-Children’s Book Adaptation,” 1). It stayed in theaters for 24 weeks and became the number one sci-fi film based on a

book as well as the film release of the spring (“Family-Children's Book Adaptation,” 1). It is the fourth fastest film to \$100 million and its sales continue to rise (“Family-Children's Book Adaptation,” 1).

What *The Hunger Games* marketing team did remarkably well to create this kind of buzz and success around their property was vested in a sort of grassroots campaign. In harnessing the powers of social media, the marketing team allowed fans to feel a part of the film, as if they are discovering it and promoting it (Barnes, 2012, 1). Lionsgate maintained the standard marketing techniques with its posters, magazine cover stories, billboards, and bus shelter advertisements, but they also created a digital piece that was the center of their efforts (2012, 1). Through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, an iPhone game, and live Yahoo streaming from the premiere, the team was able to plug into their young adult audience on their own terms (2012, 1). “By carefully lighting online kindlings (releasing a fiery logo to movie blogs) and controlling the Internet burn over the course of months (a Facebook contest here, a Twitter scavenger hunt there), Lionsgate’s chief marketing officer, Tim Palen, appears to have created a box office inferno” (2012, 1). Interestingly, the marketing budget for this film was a mere \$45 million (2012, 1).

One important online component involved a sweepstakes to bring five fans to the movie’s North Carolina set. Notably, Lionsgate invited no reporters: The studio did not want consumers thinking this was another instance of Hollywood trying to force-feed them a movie through professional filters. “People used to be O.K. with studios telling them what to like,” Ms. DePalma said. ‘Not anymore. Now it’s, ‘You don’t tell us, we tell you’ (2012, 1).

This idea that fans were responsible for the success of the books and its transformation into a film allowed Lionsgate to create an insider’s club that contributed to their larger marketing efforts.

Though the books are highly regarded within the literary community and even appear on junior high reading lists internationally, the subject of kids killing kids does not always translate well and reception was really important to the success of the film. Because of this, the marketing campaign never highlighted any of the combat scenes that make up over half the movie, instead clinging to the notion that, "If you want to see the games you have to buy a ticket" (Barnes, 2012, 1). When the marketers released a one-minute sneak peek online at MTV.com, they also prompted a Twitter campaign that allowed fans to discover TheCapitol.pn, a site that had visitors make digital ID cards as if they lived in Panem (2012, 1). Through this portal they allowed fans to campaign to become mayors of the various districts in addition to other interactive feature (2012, 1). The next big Twitter campaign involved a puzzle piece digital poster release that required fans to discover the greater picture through Photoshopping them together or physically printing them out before reposting the finals to the page (2012, 1). In February, Capitol TV launched on YouTube and has since generated over 18 million views (2012, 1). Additionally, in order to continue the buzz until the DVD release, the marketing team released a new Facebook game and a separate virtual tour of the Capitol in partnership with Microsoft (2012, 1). These online avenues allowed fans to become a part of *The Hunger Games* war and organically contribute to its marketing campaign.

In addition to completely revamping the digital sphere of marketing through engaging fans in this world they grew to love in the books, *The Hunger Games* team also used more traditional methods to bridge the gap between the book and the film

by utilizing its stars. In the spirit of its grassroots campaigns, the stars went on a national mall tour a month before its theater debut (Clark, 2012, 1). This weeklong event hit major markets in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Phoenix, Chicago, Miami, Dallas, Minneapolis, and Seattle, and it was marketed through Facebook RSVPs (2012, 1). During the tour, the soundtrack, featuring huge stars like Taylor Swift and The Decemberists, was cross-promoted to engage fans of these avenues (2012, 1). *The Hunger Games* is an excellent example of how a book is the beginning to another avenue where fans can interact with story through every medium available.

The Hunger Games movie was a roaring success, not only because of the book, but also because of the ways in which it engaged its fans. Readers and moviegoers in the 21st century alike almost expect to be interacting on every platform available to them and, while buzz surrounding a film or movie is good, the ways in which the team surrounding this property were able to bridge the gap between both allowed for a roaring success at the box office and in bookstores. Through faithful, careful, and entertaining adaptation that utilized the strengths of the movie medium while maintaining the spirit of the story and the author's voice, *The Hunger Games* was able to capture the hearts of millions and create a fan-base that continues to grow and interact every day as they await the next book-to-film adaptation. From humble beginnings to rockstar fame, *The Hunger Games* phenomenon took over the country and had everyone talking about a Young Adult series.

Both *Harry Potter* and the *Hunger Games* are examples of highly successful children's book-to-film adaptations that became global phenomena in feature film, publishing, education, and marketing. Not only were they the first in a lot of

respective categories, but they also set the standards for what other movies in the future can achieve. Both *Harry Potter* and the *Hunger Games* are, at the end of the day, good stories, and from these good stories publishers, entertainment companies, educators, parents, and children alike can be entertained, engaged, and educated. This model is one that all book-to-film adaptations should strive for, not in regards to the specific plots that these two movies are centered around, but on their abilities to captivate their audience through innovative measures and create meaning based in the conventions of storytelling that provides springboards for discussion of larger topics.

CHAPTER 4: Company Portfolios

Media companies in the entertainment and publishing sphere are responsible for dissemination of knowledge as well as the creation of their products. Both Scholastic and Walden Media are examples of companies that work in both the children's book publishing and children's film and television space. Through these companies we can examine how children's books have been distributed over time, where education meets entertainment, and how book-to-film adaptations are born.

VI. Scholastic

Scholastic is the largest publisher and distributor of children's books in the world (Robinson, 2013, 1). They employ over 9,500 people worldwide and have approximately \$2 billion dollars in annual revenues (2013, 1). For most people, Scholastic is synonymous with book fairs, classroom magazines, *Harry Potter*, and *The Hunger Games* trilogy. In its 90 years of existence, Scholastic has infiltrated over 90% of schools in the United States through partnering with educators and librarians (2013, 1). Additionally, over half of the elementary school teachers in the United States utilize a Scholastic account, on the Internet or in print, where they can gain free access to teaching resources, lesson plans, in-class activities, and other Scholastic developed products (2013, 1).

Scholastic was started on October 22, 1920 when they published a four-page magazine in 50 high schools in Western Pennsylvania entitled *The Western Pennsylvania Scholastic*. Now, the magazine reaches over 22 million students every year ("Classroom Magazines", 2013, 1). The magazine, which is the cornerstone of the Scholastic brand, has grown into 29 different subsidiary titles and has evolved to

include online activities, videos, skill sheets, and other supplements (2013, 1). Scholastic capitalized on the availability of the children's publishing industry by integrating their products into schools.

The Scholastic book clubs are the hallmark of their brand. Each month, Scholastic sends flyers to teachers registered with them that then allow their students to order "timely, popular, fun to read, and just right for your class" books (Scholastic, 2013, 1). Each month Scholastic compiles these lists and provides reduced prices by selling them wholesale to classrooms around the world. In the United States, there are six different book clubs broken down by age group: Honeybee for toddlers to four year olds; Firefly for pre-kindergarteners and kindergarteners; See-Saw for children in kindergarten and grade 1; Lucky for kids in grades 2 and 3; Arrow for students in grades 4, 5, and 6; and Tab for preteens in grades 7 and up. Scholastic also has developed Storia, an eBook collection that has content for children in pre-kindergarten through grade 9 (2013, 1).

These specialized book clubs are mutually beneficial to Scholastic, schools, students, teachers and parents. First and foremost, Scholastic can use these monthly handouts to sell their own products and advertise them to their consumers directly. Not only does this help them allow children to feel they have discovered these titles on their own, but it also allows them to constantly be in touch with their main consumers, a challenge that often plagues those advertising to children. Additionally, Scholastic benefits by creating brand loyalty and recognition. Some parents view the brand as one that promotes literacy and children view the brand as an accessible one that provides them with consistently good reading material in an

organized fashion. Also, because the book club flyers are handed out to entire classrooms, they make reading more mainstream and “cool.” For parents, Scholastic is viewed as encouraging their children to read

While Scholastic maintains this mutually beneficial relationship, they also receive criticism for it. As the book guides promote their own books, parents and teachers feel they are targeting young children and invading the classroom. They have also received a lot of problematic press for their promotion of branded material that is not their own, for example, the SunnyD or Shell franchises (Golin, 2011, 1). This advertising becomes problematic when it is distributed to children in the classroom without the parents consent and is paired with educational material so that it appears to be equally beneficial. Also, because Scholastic has a media division and their books have been made into book-to-film adaptations, some parents are unhappy with their movie tie-ins, from the covers to their featured ads that create a push for the movies that some purists feel should not be included (2011, 1). While Scholastic aims to maintain a good balance between their different properties, they are often combated for the ways in which they present their material and what it advocates.

Still, while these complaints do make very valid arguments, at the end of the day, Scholastic is engaging children in reading on many platforms and integrating their products into parents’ children’s classrooms which makes the whole process effortless for parents who just have to write a check to supply their kid with a wide range of books. Scholastic provides books at a very low cost, which makes reading an affordable habit for children to experience and develop.

For teachers and schools, Scholastic is providing monetary incentive. “Every order earns your class valuable Bonus Points...Bonus Points can be redeemed for FREE Books, eBooks, classroom materials, teaching supplies, gift cards, electronics, and more” (Scholastic, 2013, 1). Additionally, it fosters a community of readers from a very young age and provides them with means of getting them in an affordable manner. Scholastic also provides teachers with elearning tools that create handouts and lesson plans that accompany their books and other popular titles. In the teachers’ prize redemption magazine for the 2012-2013 academic calendar year, there are reading group literature guides to *The Giver*, *The Outsiders*, *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*/*If You Give a Moose a Muffin*, *Because of Winn-Dixie*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Alexander... Bad Day*, *Charlotte’s Web*, and *Holes* (2013, 1). Of these titles, five of them are feature films and one has been in production for decades. Undoubtedly this trend exists because of the popularity of the books, however, in maintaining their continued interest over time, book sales benefit the movie and vice versa.

For children, the benefits of the book club are seemingly endless. Not only does it provide them with the opportunity to discover new and exciting books, but it also provides a social community around this hobby. The online component makes tools accessible and the way that Scholastic functions allows students to participate in the prize program as well, making a game of reading that makes the task less arduous for disengaged readers.

The popularity of Scholastic’s Book Club branch goes hand in hand with their publishing branch. “Publishing trends are truly driven by a vital community of

readers—our kids. We see readers get excited about books, talk about them, and share them with their friends. Before you know it a book is trending, more and more kids are vying to read it, and they can't get enough of it," remarks David Allender, Editorial Director for Scholastic Book Clubs ("Scholastic Editors Forecast Top 10 Trends", 2012, 1). Through the book club they can market their new and backlogged titles. Though Scholastic is home to hundreds of children's literature books, notable books that have been emblazoned with the brand are the *Clifford the Big Red Dog* (from which the company gets its logo), *Captain Underpants*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *Goosebumps*, *Animorphs*, *The Babysitters Club*, *Harry Potter* (American rights), *The Hunger Games*, *The Magic School Bus*, *iSpy*, *Maya and Miguel*, *Star Wars*, and *Wishbone*. Not surprisingly, most of these top-selling novels have gone on to become television shows and movies, contributing to the Scholastic brand. Due to the increasing popularity of this business venture, Scholastic Productions (now Scholastic Media) was born in 1978.

Scholastic Media is responsible for the transition from page to screen of Scholastic properties including any and all forms of media and consumer products. They acquired two production studios, Soup2Nuts and Weston Woods, to develop everything from animation to full-length features to classroom video supplements.

"The division develops, produces, and distributes critically acclaimed and best-selling interactive and digital content on multiple platforms—including content for Leapster, Leapster2, Leapster Explorer, LeapFrog's Tag Learning System, Nintendo Wii and DS, as well as apps for iPod touch, iPhone, iPad, and Android. Most recently, Scholastic Media developed the software for Storia, the new children's eReading application..." ("Media & The Mission", 2013, 1).

The aim of Scholastic Media, therefore, is to take learning into a more interactive digital sphere by engaging with their consumers in this multi-faceted, digital era.

Scholastic is a brilliant enterprise because of the way it integrates all of its different entities into seamless configuration in an easy-to-use, increasingly accessible platform. For example, on *The Hunger Games* individual site, there are click links to buy the book, get all of the “official movie-tie-in books,” watch the movie trailer, watch the book trailer, watch an interview with Suzanne Collins the author, play games, download add-ons, check out the author’s other work, and look at other books that you might like if you enjoyed *The Hunger Games*. Additionally, you can go to the Facebook page and learn more by clicking through this uncluttered interface (Scholastic, 2013, 1). Though admittedly not the most advanced site, it is easy to use, non-threatening to parents, and unobtrusive for children. It plays to the strengths of having the book/movie tie-in while not forcing either. In doing this, teachers will feel comfortable with the books as an educational source while children can still gain entertainment value from it, making it the perfect Scholastic property.

Scholastic engages its audience through interactivity in a way that creates customer loyalty at a very young age. In creating a brand that transcends every aspect of a child’s influences in their early years—teachers, parents, and friends—they provide a network that is fostered in community. Though children’s publishing isn’t a multi-million dollar enterprise, Scholastic has managed to capitalize on the possibilities that creating an audience in this industry provide. Scholastic engages their customers on multiple different media platforms, making them accessible and engaging for children. They also work with teachers and parents to mobilize free marketing tactics and involve multiple parties in learning. Scholastic also bridges

some of the gaps between book and film through their in house development studios which allows them to not only profit from their products but also monitor how they are being made and what they are teaching. Scholastic has created a model that allows hands on learning, cross-promotion, and accessibility to parents, teachers, and children.

VII. Walden Media

Similar to Scholastic, Walden Media is a production and publishing company focused in the family entertainment sphere. Their mission statement reads:

Our mission is to provide families with programming that inspires, engages, enlightens, and entertains. We believe that quality entertainment is inherently educational and can capture our audience's imagination, rekindle curiosity, and demonstrate the rewards of knowledge and virtue. Since we are committed to reaching audiences of all ages, we will only make films that are rated G, PG, or in some instances, PG-13. Similarly, we will only produce television programming that is suitable for general audience" (Walden Media, 1999, 1).

The company was started by Micheal Flaherty and Cary Granat, the former president of Miramax Films' Dimension label and executive at Universal Pictures, in May 2001 ("Walden Media to Produce C.S. Lewis'...", 2001, 1). They began with a hyperfocus on "educational subject matter presented through the mediums of film, television, publishing, music, and media ventures" (2001, 1). Through this aim they have made over 15 award-winning children's book-to film adaptations

Holes, the first project of Walden Media, was the perfect complement to the company's aims. "The first thing we look at is whether the book is being taught in schools...Central to our mission is assisting teachers in the classroom, we try to find ways to make the material come more alive for the students," said Walden president and co-founder Micheal Flaherty (Maughan, 2003, 22). *Holes* is a popular title on

reading lists in the classroom having acquired a Newbery Honor Award and many other honors. Additionally, the film matched the profile of a good book-to-film adaptation; a familiar concept, quirky characters, and star power in the young Shia LaBeouf, a Disney channel favorite. “It has a lot of color. It’s a complex but easy-to-follow story filled with wonderful, universal themes—friendship, destiny, history—that really works for the big screen” says Ellen Levine, a Manhattan literary agent who works as co-agent with Susan Schulman on certain film rights projects and sold the rights to *Walden* (Maughan, 2002, 22). The story was able to blossom so beautifully because of the way in which Walden Media fostered the relationship between Louis Sachar, the author of the novel and the subsequent screenplay, and Andrew Davis, the director of the film, even going so far as to have Sachar on set and make a cameo in the film (2002, 22). This kind of company culture is what, Flaherty believes, accounts for the success of the film (Maughan, 2003, 81). “It was something magical: they (Sachar and Davis) shared the same vision for the book. We did 65 screenings for students and teachers and 99% of the questionnaires were extremely positive” (2003, 81). True to the company’s emphasis on education, Flaherty goes on to explain how the movie’s theatrical release was just the beginning of the efforts. “In November we’re having a writers’ workshop at Regal Theaters in 40 cities and in four different time zones.... It’s a one-hour program during which Andy and Louis will answer questions about writing. The book property is really just the first part of an effort that doesn’t end when the movie is finished” (2003, 81). It is this spirit that has allowed the company to prosper over the past decade.

After the success of *Holes*, Walden then acquired the rights to the Narnia franchise, another solid choice for a book-to-film adaptation because of its educational components, moral resonance, and action-packed story. Matching with the company's mission statement, Walden found, "Resonance between its (Narnia's) educational mission and the book's universal themes of truthfulness, loyalty, and courage" ("Walden Media to Produce C.S. Lewis'...", 2001, 1). Again with this effort, Walden went back to the source to provide the most faithful adaptation, teaming up with the C.S. Lewis Company (2001, 1). This strategy allowed Walden to reengage the fans of the age-old series that were anxious for its movie adaptation (Burt, 2004, 1). Also notable in the way in which Walden viewed the goldmine they uncovered in gaining the rights to this property was the way they handled the press.

The seven Narnia books—including *Prince Caspian*, *The Voyage of the Dawn Trader* and *The Last Battle*—have sold more than 85 million copies worldwide. And if the debut film proves a similar hit, it could spawn a cinema phenomenon emulating the Lord of the Rings trilogy—in turn creating a bow-wave for additional book sales, computer games, toys, and other merchandise. But Walden, a relative newcomer to the movie industry, envisages another business opportunity in Narnia: educational publishing, school workshops and teacher training (Burt, 2004, 1).

In this way, Narnia was the publicity stunt that launched Walden's mission into the limelight.

With their focus on educational components of movies, Walden looked to gain additional revenue from learning tools and books linked to their screen productions. "We believe there is an enormous market opportunity in the world of education and entertainment...If a studio could be born that marries the best of family entertainment and a new approach to education, we could show kids an alternative of what they learn in school," remarked Cary Granat (Burt, 2004, 1). In

this way, Walden was able to win over their financial backer, Phil Anschutz of The Anschutz Entertainment Group (a subsidiary of the larger Anschutz Company) which owns other properties including AEG live, the L.A. Kings, and the Sprint Center (among other properties) and manages the touring, festival, and exhibition of some of the largest acts in the world (“Company Overview”, 2013, 1). AEG is also responsible for Coachella Music and Arts Festival, Stagecoach, and New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, amongst other large events (2013, 1). One of the initial benefits was the launching of a program called Reel Think. AEG owns Regal Entertainment, and through this joint venture Walden launched “virtual school rooms” where celebrities were invited to conduct classes about Walden’s literary-based films and link over 20,000 children by satellite (Burt, 2004, 1). Though this venture has since dissipated, its energy allowed Walden to go and produce such children’s classics as *Because of Winn Dixie*, *The Bridge to Terabithia*, *How to Eat Fried Worms*, and, more recently, *Ramona and Beezus*, among others.

In addition to its blossoming film industry, Walden continued to mold its unique brand through another one of its offshoots, Walden Pond Press. Originally started as a joint venture with Penguin, Walden currently has an imprint with HarperCollins Children’s Books. Through these efforts, Walden has gained serious credentials as a company that produces quality, family-friendly, educational, and engaging content including award-winning *Savvy* by Ingrid Law, *Comeback Kids* by Mike Lupica, and *The Fourth Stall* by Chris Rylander. Though this branch of the company was initially launched to feed into the production arm, Walden has yet to make one of its own books, instead, on occasion, optioning them out to other

companies including Nickelodeon, showing the growth of the book-to-film industry at large. Meanwhile, the relationship that Walden Pond Press was able to forge with publishers has contributed to its successful adaptations as they now have a direct link in working on projects such as the *Narnia* series or *Terabithia*, which are both HarperCollins books.

Walden Media remains one of the leaders in family entertainment. Though they are no longer solely focused in the book-to-film sphere, producing such films as this Christmas's *Parental Guidance* and Sundance's *Waiting for Superman*, Walden continues to operate in the family film sphere. This year they are launching a joint venture with Hallmark, Wal-Mart, and Proctor and Gamble, entitled Walden Family Entertainment, which will bring book-to-film adaptations back into the limelight for Walden. Currently in production is the second book-to-film adaptation of *Nim's Island* entitled *Return to Nim's* and the critically acclaimed *The Watsons Go To Birmingham-1963*. In addition to these TV movies, Walden is in pre-production on the long awaited classic, *The Giver*, which has been in Hollywood for over a decade. While the roots of Walden continue to shift and mold, it is clear that the heart of the company is tied into their mission statement in bridging educational and entertaining content in a way that both engages and enlightens its viewers.

Both Walden and Scholastic showcase the importance of the interplay between children's books and children's films. The precedence that each company puts on education, the subject matters that they are tackling, and the means in which they reach their audiences are examples of how the movie and the publishing industries have changed over time and begun to merge in some respects. These

companies serve as examples of the capabilities of entertainment in the education sphere and vice versa. Through them, it is clear that the trends in book-to-film adaptations are being met with enthusiasm and good-natured products that have garnered both critical and monetary success.

CHAPTER 5: Theories

Both child development theories and media theories serve as the guiding principles in the creation and utilization of book-to-film adaptations. In looking at some these theories, we can better understand how book-to-film adaptations effect children at different developmental stages, why book-to-film adaptations are so popular and effective, and how different facets of the community find both fault and merit in their creation.

VIII. Child Development Theories

Oftentimes, child development theories are utilized to either support or impede the integration of media into children's cognition and development. These theories, most of which have existed for centuries, can be understood in light of how children at different ages and different developmental stages are affected by a medium (such as film, books, or both), how children make sense of media content and how that might change as they grow developmentally, and what children can gain from maintaining a variety of sources of entertainment and education. Both Albert Bandura and Jean Piaget developed theories relevant to these issues that help to both understand the benefits and deficits associated with media consumption and also how children digest media at different stages of their life.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory draws a connection between behavior and consequence (Cole, 1993, 21). The two main principles of Bandura's work in social learning revolve around concepts of modeling, "the process by which children observe and imitate others", and self-efficacy, "people's beliefs about their own abilities to effectively meet standards and achieve their goals" (Bandura, 1965, 1-7;

Cole, 1993, 21). Bandura's theories claim that people can learn and, therefore, unlearn from direct observation and modeling (1993, 21). Recent theorists have since applied these social learning theories to children's understanding of television and film, citing shows such as *Sesame Street* as ones that provide examples of positive prosocial development and allow children to watch and emulate role models from the screen.

In his famous "Bobo Doll" experiment, Bandura presented three groups of children with an identical video clip followed by differing responses and rewards/punishments. The clip features an adult model acting aggressively towards a Bobo doll; however, the corresponding clips differ (Bandura, 1965, 1-7). In the first follow-up clip, the adult model is rewarded for his behavior. In the second follow-up clip, he is chastised for his behavior. The third clip features no positive or negative reinforcement. The responses of the children watching the film and the subsequent responses to it highlighted that children could not only learn from their own positive or negative reinforcement, but they could also learn from watching another person's (1965, 1-7). What was presented on the screen and the behaviors of the children after showed a correlation that has since been used in providing both support and criticism of television and film, particularly violent and morally corrupt behaviors. Still, while this provides a basis for understanding, this application of Bandura's theory supposes a passive model of viewing as opposed to the active engagement theory we now believe in today.

Bandura's theory is, however, relevant in the context of television and film watching as children can learn and apply what they see. It is both beneficial and

harmful for children to watch film and television as they have the opportunity to provide positive examples of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behavior. Children exposed to television such as *Sesame Street*, *Arthur*, *Curious George*, and other shows with strong concepts, good role models, and acceptable behavior have shown gains in early literacy and math skills and to academic progress in elementary school (Berk, 1997, 630). Scholars site the social learning theory as the basis for what children can gain from having a visual medium and Bandura is at the forefront of these theories.

Like Bandura's theories based in social learning, Jean Piaget's theories on moral and cognitive development also lend themselves to the study of media effects on a child's development. Piaget believed that children move through four stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. His theory on cognitive-development also concluded that these stages were universal and everyone went through them in that order only (Berk, 1997, 224). One of the main building blocks of his work was the concept of schema or, "organized ways of making sense of experiences," which change with age (1997, 225). This concept helps to alleviate some of the discrepancies from one stage to the other as children reorganize their schema and assimilate and accommodate new knowledge into existing or new schemas as they encounter new experiences (1997, 225).

In each stage, much can be deduced about how children understand and digest the media they are consuming. In the sensorimotor stage, one of the important takeaways is the concept of object permanence. When infants are first exposed to television, a practice that is not uncommon for newborns either through programs

such as *Baby Einstein* or through watching whatever their parents are watching, they do not grasp that what they see is different from real life (Berk, 1997, 234). They typically respond as if viewing people directly, laughing, smiling, and waving their arms and legs. A lot of times, infants grab at the screen, interacting with the moving picture as if it were a physical object they could grasp. By the end of the sensorimotor phase, children can understand that what they are viewing on a screen is different from something that exists in front of them, but they continue to have a hard time placing the significance of that which they see on the screen (1997, 234).

In the preoperational stage, children begin to engage in make-believe play and other creative endeavors (Berk, 1997, 236). This shift is important in children's understanding of story, which translates to how they can break down and interpret a movie and/or a book. Through make believe play children may also begin to emulate what they see, both in person and on the screen. Here, Bandura's theory of social learning comes in to play as children may act violently towards a friend while playing swords in imitation of their favorite television characters or they might act gently towards a baby as the people in one of the picture books they read does (1997, 20). Drawing is also important because it begins to take form and children begin to represent words and thoughts in images (1997, 239). This allows them to make the connections between screen and story through symbol-real world relations, which is especially important in understanding stories translated for the screen such as *The Magic Schoolbus*, *Arthur*, and *Curious George*. Children still have a hard time with concepts of conservation, reversibility, hierarchical classification,

and egocentric thinking, which contributes to their very literal understanding of events (1997, 241-245).

Past the preoperational stage, children begin to understand the underlying meaning in things (Berk, 1997, 249). In the formal operational stage, children develop the capacity for abstract thinking. While not all adults reach this last stage, the cognition required to understand symbolism and metaphors is often taught in school so children can begin to make connections between different mediums and messages.

By age two, children understand that what is happening on the screen is not happening in front of them (Berk, 1997, 245). By age four, children can recognize that actors are not synonymous with the characters they portray. By age seven, children can understand the difference between real and imaginary. By age eleven, children can begin to dissect the underlying meaning and messages in stories. Piaget's four stages of development showcase the transformation that children undergo in dissecting life around them and placing it into schemata that help them to break down and relate things to one another (1997, 20-21). As they grow, children can take away different things from the media. They begin to understand special effects, advertisements versus programming, and fluid storylines that span multiple episodes and films. They can relate to characters and their actions and, at times, they even emulate them. Both Piaget and Bandura suggest that children understand media and can gain positives (and negatives) in being exposed to film and television as another medium for stories and behavior modification.

IX. Media Theories

As opposed to child development theories, media theories have evolved over time, especially in the last few decades as media has developed at a rapid past. Early media theories spoke about the effects of propaganda and each new medium and its effect on people. Today, because there are so many different avenues for media consumption, media theories must tackle how people receive messages coming from a host of different mediums at the same time. As people become more and more interconnected, theories such as the agenda setting theory and the cultivation theory become relevant in new ways. Both Marshall McLuhan and George Gerbner were at the forefront of media studies. Each developed theories that looked at how people consume media, what differing types of media consumption mean, and how media was presented. Through their work, it becomes clearer how children and people in general understand and digest media on a day-to-day basis.

Marshall McLuhan is most famous for the catchphrase, “the medium is the message” (McLuhan, 1967, 23). McLuhan claims that the social and personal consequences of any medium creates a new schema of understanding and therefore contributes to what one can take away from that specific medium. He continues by claiming that people become modified by the technologies that they use (1967, 23). He postulates that how people consume a message is more important than the message itself, going as far as to argue that it does not matter if televisions show children’s programming or violence, if people are watching television, than that is the important part, not what they are watching (1996). The effect that a particular medium, be it television, film, the internet, Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram, has on

society is more closely linked to the actual means in which information is being disseminated than on what one is receiving from the medium (1967).

McLuhan also makes the point that different medias follow different rules. This is especially important in terms of children's book-to-film adaptations, as how a child can understand a book is completely different than how a child understands a movie. In this sense, McLuhan makes the point that there is much to be gained from both. A paragraph in a book can be reread over and over again or read completely out of context but a movie must be watched from start to finish in order to gain its meaning.

Additionally, McLuhan speaks to the differing degrees of participation that various media require (McLuhan, 1967). He makes a distinction between "hot" and "cool" media, which classifies how someone understands the medium. "Hot" media play to one specific sense (1967). McLuhan cites the movies as an example of a "hot" media that engages vision. "Cool" media, require more effort, and McLuhan cites comics as an example as they require the viewer to fill in details where the cartoonists left off visually. When a medium requires a viewer's attention primarily to one sense, it can be classified as "hot" but when it requires more, as many movies do today, it become a "cool" media. Ironically, McLuhan differentiated television as a "cool" media (1967). As films become more intrinsically related to television in their episodic format (with sequels and spinoffs), these definitions continue to be muddled. Still, the original claim that the ways in which we engage with mediums changes our understanding of the message is relevant to this distinction.

One of Gerbner's premiere theories, the cultivation theory, focused on the centrality of television and its effects on forming a common symbolic environment for all people (Gerbner, 1986). The theory explores the notion that the more time a person spends watching television; the more likely they are to believe that which they see on the television as reality. Gerbner believed that television was the most "centralized system of story-telling" (1986). Whereas books and other methods of communication had to deal with literacy and mobility, television was accessible and understandable to a much larger audience. Gerbner's work aligned with the agenda setting theory, which suggests that media might not tell us what to think but it will tell us what to think about. Gerbner felt so strongly about the power of television that he often compared it to religion, and he often found television surpassing all other cultural institutions as far as scope and universal approval. Television, Gerbner believed, created a set of "widely shared assumptions, images, and conceptions reflecting the institutional characteristics and interests of the medium itself" (1986). Television therefore, in terms of the cultivation theory, exists as the common denominator for all people that helps to spread a mutual understanding of the same facts and fictions.

Gerbner's main focus was on storytelling and the universal accessibility of television. He believed in both its power to do good and evil, which he discussed at length in his mean world syndrome, which focuses on how violence in media makes viewers believe the world is a more violent place than it actually is. This concept has been applied to child development theories and works, at times, in collaboration with Bandura's social learning theory. When children are exposed to things on

television, they often believe them to be true and therefore, understand them as the social norm and as acceptable behavior. It is therefore important for books, television, and film to maintain behaviors and characters that are believable, relatable, and in line with good moral values and codes as to create viewers who can sympathize with and emulate what they see on their screens.

Through McLuhan, Gerbner, Piaget, and Bandura, children's motivation, understanding, and comprehension of book-to-film adaptations becomes more apparent. While these experts do provide the theoretical framework for looking at this area, there still exists many areas to be explored as new innovations come to fruition and take hold, specifically in the media-saturated world we currently live in. These overarching theories are the guidelines for which we have and continue to examine children on a broad scale and allow us to better understand what is relevant to audience, how different mediums change the message, and why these creative and practical decisions are important considerations.

CHAPTER 6: Media Literacy

Media literacy is an area of education that allows its students to situate themselves within the 21st century media-saturated world. Through media literacy, children (and adults) can begin to make sense of how they consume, why they consume, and whom they consume their media from. It is this understanding that inevitably equips children to understand the implications of their actions and, as it relates to book-to-film adaptations, the differences between a book, a film, a script, and any other iteration of a story that they might encounter.

X. What is MEDIA LITERACY?

Media Literacy has many names and even more definitions. According to Wally Bowen, a member of Citizens for Media Literacy, “Media literacy seeks to empower citizens and to transform their passive relationship to media into an active, critical engagement- capable of challenging the traditions and structure of a privatized, commercial media culture, and finding new avenues of citizen speech and discourse” (Bowen, 1996, 1). Jane Tallim defines it as,

Media literacy is the ability to sift through and analyze the messages that inform, entertain and sell to use every day. It’s the ability to bring critical thinking skills to bear on all media- from music videos and Web environments to product placement in films and virtual displays on NHL hockey boards. It’s about asking pertinent questions about what’s there, and noticing what’s not there. And it’s the instinct to question money, the values and the ownership- and to be aware of how these factors influence content (Tallim, 2010, 1).

And, in the words of Neil Andersen (speaking on the difference between media literacy and media education), he explains, ““Media literacy” is a quality, like a tan which can be achieved. For example: “Yo! Check it out! I am media literate!” (In comparison) “Media education” is an ongoing process, which can develop and

evolve” (Andersen, 2010, 1). Media literacy is the ability to watch an episode of *American Idol* and recognize that it is normal and, at the same time, not necessary to crave an ice cold Coca Cola product; it is the ability to read a magazine and not want to buy the latest Tory Burch flats just because Drew Barrymore is sporting them; it is the ability to log onto one’s Facebook page and see the perfectly crafted sidebar advertisement and resist the urge to click on the link to purchase the new Flip Camera, even though you just wrote a letter home to mom asking for it for Christmas. It’s the conscious ability to differentiate between what you think and what the media is telling you to think, the cognition to know that just because the media says it is so does not mean it is necessarily true, or at least the whole story, and it’s the critical analysis to recognize the takeaway of knowing these truths about the media and its implications.

In addition to these things, media literacy is so much more. Media literacy is the ability to use hashtags and iChat; Google and Spotify; lol and brb. It’s the difference between 1927 and 1928 when the first regularly scheduled television service aired (Long, 2007, 1). It’s waking up to a text message alert and falling asleep to a tivoed episode of *Modern Family*. Each of these is an example of how media is unconsciously involved in our day-to-day lives. How we use it, how we understand it, and how we manipulate it are functions of how media literate we are as people and as a society at large. Instead of newspapers, magazines, TV and radio as the main (and only) sources of information, today’s media consumers have shifted their attention to:

Any of the ONE TRILLION sites in Google’s index; reading any of the 2.6M articles on Wikipedia; watching some of the 70M+ videos on

YouTube; trying to read even a fraction of the 133M blogs; act as one of the 100M users who log on to Facebook daily; or attempt to follow some of the more than 3M tweets sent through Twitter daily (Borsch, 2009, 1).

In this way, being media literate means “being both a consumer of media and a producer of it” (2009, 1). Because of this necessity, there is a strain on media literacy educators as they not only have to be competent enough to teach how to critically understand and evaluate media, but they also have to be up to date on the newest media and proficient enough in it to recognize how to teach media literacy in relation to it. As people become more educated, not necessarily about the information they are sharing but on how to share this information, media literacy skills and education become more and more important (2009, 1).

XI. Generation Z (M)

Generation Z has also been called Generation M, the Net Generation, Generation I, Generation Next, or the Internet Generation. It is the name most commonly associated with children born from the early 1990s through the present (Lyon, 2010, 1). The generation is most clearly defined by the media they consume and grew up exposed to. “While parts of Gen Y have distant, hazy memories of a pre-smartphone world, Gen Z has no recollection. As a result, Gen Z are true digital natives- having grown-up on iPods, text messaging, Facebook, smart phones, and YouTube. They are coming of age publicly on the web, are true multi-taskers and have a no-holds-barred attitude about blogging and digital publishing (2010, 1). This is both exciting and terrifying. When members of Generation Z come of age and begin to get jobs (as those on the cusp of the age

bracket are now), their whole life is neatly organized into Facebook photos, MySpace statuses, LinkedIn connections, and Twitters feeds. Long ago are the days where one could participate in teenage debauchery and receive the obligatory slap on the wrist before forgetting about it and brushing it off in the distant “past.” Now, with a click of a button, one can, presumably, find out more than they want to know about another person.

Media usage today is at an all time high. A national survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that:

With technology allowing nearly 24-hour media access as children and teens go about their daily lives, the amount of time young people spend with entertainment media has risen dramatically, especially among minority youth. Today, 8-18 year-olds devote an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes to using entertainment media across a typical day (more than 53 hours a week). And because they spend so much of that time ‘media multitasking’ (using more than one medium at a time), they actually manage to pack a total of 10 hours and 45 minutes worth of media content into those 7 ½ hours (Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts, 2010, 1).

If the rise from 6 hours and 21 minutes in 2004 to 7 hours and 28 minutes in 2009 is any indication, these numbers are still rising (despite there only being 24 hours in a day) (2010, 1).

This generation is defined by immediacy and instant gratification (Lyon, 2010, 1). Their values have shifted away from privacy and now align more closely with creative expression and the notion that everyone is connected anyway, so why not capitalize on this idea and see what comes of it (2010, 1). Social media sites are all about linking you to who you know and who your friend’s friends know and how this social sphere comes into play as people move around the world and are yet connected to everyone from every part of their life

(2010, 1). Generation Z is a generation based in productivity, but also in demand as they expect higher quality as they engage in new media platforms (even if the creators of their media do not necessarily advance at the same pace that they do) (2010, 1).

Looking at Generation Z another way, the catchphrase becomes “more, more, more,” and not, “we have more, so what does it mean and what can we do with it before moving on to the next thing,” or more simply, “breath and take it all in.” In the Kaiser study they found that, “Use of every type of media has increased over the past 10 years, with the exception of reading” (Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts, 2010, 1). The questions now become more about what’s going to happen to this guinea-pig generation when the process comes full circle for the first time, much in the same way that it did when television was first introduced and then regulated and now mainstreamed and oversaturated. Smartphones have become the norm and now, not only “do more young people own a cell phone, but also cells have morphed into a way to consume **more** media” (2010, 1). In much the same way, the Internet has become a tool for consuming all the media that’s fit to print in collaboration with film and television media (in addition to the media that is created for the Internet first and foremost) (2010, 1). The Internet is a powerful tool, one that has become the unquestioned mascot of this generation, and its grasp and impact has yet to be fully realized. So what does that mean? It means now more than ever it is not only important to take stock of what is happening around us and how we have arrived there, but it also means (and I believe more importantly), **media literacy**. It is through this process of critically

looking at and evaluating that, which is new to us that we may continue to remain conscious consumers and creators in this digital age.

XII. Current Debate in the United States about Media Literacy

The United States has fallen behind in the global media literacy education movement (Rogers, 2013, 1). The United States education system is a tangled mess of government regulations met with state deregulations and objections brought back to government and the Department of Education before it ever even reaches the school and the teachers. Education in the United States is decentralized, and yet, everyone has his or her hand in it, and therefore it is hard to implement change (2013, 1).

Another important component to note in the failed media literacy educational programs of the United States is the obsession with standardized testing. “American teachers are forced to spend most of their time ensuring their students can pass the test... Media literacy is not on the standardized tests” (Rogers, 2013, 1). The question then becomes one of which comes first, the chicken or the egg, the integration of media literacy into the coursework or the changed testing? It is an important to issue to deal with because it is the same one that is preventing any serious strides from being made in this field. As Barry Duncan puts it:

Media literacy should not be considered as an add-on to the already crowded curriculum. A truly interdisciplinary activity, media literacy should be conceived as a means of facilitating the integration of critical thinking skills, aesthetics, the study of value messages, and the study of the social and political implications of media texts. Media education should permeate many activities in geography and global education,

science, and language arts, which will be conditioned by the mass media experiences young people, bring to the classroom (Duncan, 2010, 1).

Still, this is only one part of the equation. As much as media literacy needs to be utilized within the context of other courses it also needs to be taught on its own.

Media literacy is a topic that an educator could spend years on, as the topics are always changing and the information is always new. It is not something that can be crammed into the tail end of an English class or discussed briefly in the context of U.S. History. Instead, media literacy education needs to be something else entirely, a more progressive and open-ended course, still offered within the outlined and strict context of secondary education, but taught by those teachers that are able to recognize its significance and teach it in a way that will allow the students to not only understand concepts surrounding the media of the present, but also how to evaluate new media as it is created in the future (Hobbs, 1998, 1). While this can be done by engaging specific subject matters, for example utilizing a screenplay and a book to highlight the differences between how a story can be told visually versus verbally, this does not completely alleviate the problem of a missing media literacy curriculum. The question of whether or not media literacy can ever reach large numbers of students in K-12 American schools is one that has been met with much debate from media literacy enthusiasts themselves and one that notes an obvious change to the status quo that must be made on a larger scale in order to be effective, permanent, and/or impactful (1998, 1). It is hard for even the biggest advocates of media literacy to justify taking away time from one course to lend to media literacy and yet,

something needs to change in order for media literacy to become a reality to those who it will most impact (based on age, intellect, and ability to be influenced) (1998, 1).

XIII. **Current Media Literacy Awareness and Education in the United States**

Media literacy education currently exists through the dedication of a few progressive educators who recognize the impact and importance of the media in the lives of students in the 21st century. “Media Literacy Diet” is a good example of a program that is applicable to a wide range of people and reproducible on a large scale. The Vermont Tobacco Control Program (2008) created a program that first introduces what media literacy is and why it is important before diving into its four significant lesson plans. “Educating and empowering children and their parents to use media critically is the most promising strategy for protecting the public health from negative media influences” (*The Center for Media and Child Health*, 1). The program is broken down into building an awareness of the media landscape and culture, an understanding of how media is constructed, an introduction into the ways that media can influence behavior and attitude, and, finally, a production of one’s own media content (Vermont Tobacco Control Program, 2008, 1). Similar programs like this one pull resources from The Kaiser Family Foundation, The Media Literacy Clearinghouse, The Alliance for a Media Literate America, The Center for Media Literacy, and the Center on Media and Child Health (amongst many others). Though these sites offer helpful tools and guidelines on how to use media literacy, one must survey the environment that

they hope to teach in and adjust the activities according to the students they are hoping to reach and educate (Hobbs, 1998, 1).

Aside from classroom handouts and education supplements such as “Media Literacy Diet,” there are also some video supplements that hope to shed light and facilitate discussion on media literacy. The Media Education Foundation has a slew of videos on all topics breaching media literacy, however, as well done as these videos are, they fail to reach mass circulation due to the aims of the company producing them. Though they are eligible for streaming, they are more informational than pensive, service to give the facts instead of question them. There are other small productions of public service announcements such as “Media Is...” by Lori H. Eersolmaz, which interview media literacy experts and try to make conclusions on the state of things and how to move forward. I intend to draw on all of these as I move forward with my project for they are all valuable resources that take small strides towards a greater goal. I hope to add to them and advance them further, pushing the envelope and coming closer to a solution to the problem that plagues the education and media world. There is no one fix to the problem as media literacy, above all else, has taught us. With more and more people becoming not only consumers but also producers of media (as media literacy preaches and encourages), it becomes a double-edged sword to make something that stands out in this arena. Still, as we continue to unfold the media of our future, the efforts of all media literacy enthusiasts do not go unnoticed or underappreciated.

With regard to media literacy as it pertains to book-to-film adaptations, there is extreme potential. As the books that are being made into films are continually being used in the classroom, the engagement of this additional platform will provide students with another resource to improve their comprehension and creativity skills. Book-to-film adaptations provide children with an additional perspective and while they do not serve to take away from that which can be learned from the books they are based on, they can help to continue to study of a specific story or provide insight that might not be present in the original text. Book-to-film adaptations create an alternate lens to view a property through and can serve to engage our digital culture through amplifying the necessity of media literacy skills. The availability and ease in which these types of lessons can be integrated into those that already exists forces one to consider why it has not been more widely adopted and when this shift in the classroom might happen? As our society continues to become more and more technologically plugged in, the dangers of not teaching book-to-film adaptations in all their forms becomes as detrimental as relying on just the movie to learn or just the text.

CHAPTER 7: Methodology

XIV. Research Methods

As my research was a qualitative study of interviews, each person was selected for his/her background and differing perspectives in the children's entertainment sphere. I began my research by looking for the most profitable book-to-film adaptations of the last few decades. I compiled a list of companies that operated in that sphere: Color Force (*Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *The Hunger Games*), 1492 Pictures (*Percy Jackson & The Olympians*, *Rent*, and *Harry Potter*), Walden Media (*Chronicles of Narnia*, *Charlotte's Web*, and *Bridge to Terabithia*), Summit Entertainment (*Twilight*, *Perks of Being a Wallflower*, and *Ender's Game*), PBS (*Arthur*, *Curious George*, and *Martha Speaks*), Nickelodeon (*Little Bill*, *Are You Afraid of the Dark*, *Max and Ruby*, and *Franklin*), Disney (*Alice in Wonderland*, *Mary Poppins*, and *101 Dalmatians*), and Scholastic (*Clifford the Big Red Dog*, *The Magic School Bus*, and *Tuck Everlasting*). After reevaluating my topic, I realized this preliminary list was adequate; however, gaining the perspectives of multiple different industries involved in turning a book into a film and maintaining the educational development aspects of this process would be more helpful.

My next step was to compile a list of the types of people I wanted to talk to. After meeting with my advisors, a new focus for my thesis took form and we decided that the priority would be to gain the media companies' perspectives on their educational responsibility of turning a book into a film. My secondary interviews would be comprised of educators and/or librarians utilizing these materials to interact with children however, these would take place in more

candid conversations. After careful consideration I was advised to maintain a sample of 3-5 individuals who I would conduct 30-60 minute interviews with utilizing a similar set of questions as my basis for information. After reaching out to various sources, my final list of companies and people was comprised of: Micheal Flaherty, president of Walden Media and Walden Pond Press; Nikki Silver, president of Tonik Productions; Carol Greenwald, senior executive producer at PBS; and Barbara Marcus, president and publisher of Random House Books and former president of Scholastic. Each member of the sample was directly responsible for making huge strides in his/her respective industry (film, television, and/or children's literature).

Micheal Flaherty started Walden Media in 1999 with his best friend from Tufts, Cary Granat. At the time, Micheal was working in education and Cary was working in film and, together, they merged their two loves into one company with the specific focus of making quality family films based in education. "After seeing *Titanic* and seeing kids get really interested in that history I thought, what if you had a company that was just making movies about great books and great periods in history" (Flaherty, 2013) Micheal is currently working on projects including *The Giver* by Lois Lowry and *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* by Christopher Paul Curtis with Tonik Production, *Dear Dumb Diary* by Jim Benton, and *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan.

Nikki Silver graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and went on to produce a series for PBS called *Reading Rainbow*. While there, *Rainbow* won five Emmy Awards for Best Children's Series. After the show ended, Nikki went on to

start her first company, OnScreen Entertainment, and felt that authors trusted her because of her association with a show that put such a premium on good literature for children. Most recently, Nikki has started Tonik productions with her partner Tonya Lewis Lee with the mission of producing family programming with a focus on diversity, women, and adaptations. They are currently working on *The Giver* by Lois Lowry and *The Watsons Go To Birmingham* by Christopher Paul Curtis with Walden, *Mistress of Modernism: Peggy Guggenheim* by Mary Dearborn, and *Monster* by Walter Dean Meyers. “My belief is that if you show these great stories in films and television to a wide audience, it will get kids to go back and be interested in reading” (Silver, 2013).

Carol Greenwald is specifically focused in television in the public sphere. Not only does she serve as an executive producer on numerous Emmy award-winning shows, but she also has served as the Director of Development for Children’s Programming at WGBH since 1992. She has been with PBS/WGBH for the duration of her career and has seen such shows as *Arthur*, *Curious George*, and *Martha Speaks* get off the ground and into production and national acclaim. Carol received four Emmys (for *Arthur* and *Curious George*) and believes in the educational capacities of television.

Barbara Marcus is another Tufts alumnus working in the children’s entertainment sphere. Unlike the other three interviewees, Barbara’s main focus has been on the publishing side of book-to-film adaptations. While at Scholastic, Barbara was involved in acquiring the U.S. rights to the *Harry Potter* series and also dealt with some of the acquisitions of properties to be made into book-to-

film adaptations. Having worked at two of the biggest children's publishers in the world, Barbara is keen on the trend of children's publishing companies embarking in the world of creating their own adaptations as to maintain some of the earnings from their products. Barbara provided a literary perspective on the entertainment spectrum of what effects these adaptations have on education and who is responsible for them.

After compiling these potential interviewees, I created a list of questions, listed in **Appendix A** that served as the basis for each of my interviews. After each interview I partially transcribed the recordings for replication in my findings. These interviews served as the research portion of my thesis and provided insight into the minds of some of the most powerful creative dealmakers in Hollywood.

XV. Creative Methods

Over the summer I worked for three production companies in Los Angeles: The Mark Gordon Company (*Grey's Anatomy*, *Saving Private Ryan*, and *The Patriot*), Carousel Productions (Steve Carrel's new production company; *Crazy, Stupid, Love*, *The Incredible Burt Wonderstone*, and "*Inside Comedy*"), and Ian Bryce Productions (*Transformers*, *Spider-Man*, and *Twister*). Through these companies, I was able to gain a firm grasp on not only what a good script is, but also what a good story is. Throughout my eight months in Los Angeles I read countless books, oftentimes writing coverage on up to three properties in one day. When I encountered *Spy School* at Ian Bryce Productions, I, for the first time

in my four years working for productions companies, felt very passionately that this book needed to be made into a movie. While Ian Bryce Productions, which is focused in Michael Bay big action films, passed on the book in the end, I was determined to see it through. After speaking with my mentor at Walden Media, Evan Rimer, about the legality of bringing a story I found at one company to another, we recognized that the book was published and anyone could acquire it at a bookstore and bring it to the a company for consideration.

The author of the book is also a screenwriter and so I decided not to reach out to him about the project until after the pitch. In Hollywood, there is a rights buying process that books undergo where companies pay a premium to have the exclusive rights to a property for x number of years before it goes back into public domain for purchase. Since Stuart Gibbs works in Hollywood, he could easily get rid of the middle man (me) and pitch his book to the company himself. Additionally, because the rights are available on rightscenter.com, a site that lists which books have been purchased by whom, we did not contact Stuart Gibbs's representation at the International Creative Management Talent Agency. Since I have no representation, it would be curious for me to be inquiring about his book and likewise if someone from Walden called, negotiations would begin before my pitch which would muddle any sort of deal that could be made.

After clearing the property with Evan Rimer, my supervisor at Walden, I began by writing up my plot analysis and comments on the book, the first steps in completing coverage on a pitched project. With my completed coverage, I embarked on creating a pitch presentation for Micheal Flaherty, his brother Chip

Flaherty the vice president of Walden, and Evan Rimer, the director of communications at Walden.

The pitch book would consist of multiple sections but, I began by researching child stars and unknown YouTube stars who might fit some of the character descriptions I wrote out. As my story began to take form, I began mapping out some of the interesting settings and plot points that would look really good on screen. After laying the blueprint for the story, my creative research began.

Part of every pitch in Hollywood requires a comparison of other successes with a twist that makes it unique. For *Spy School* it became *Spy Kids* meets *National Treasure* meets *Harry Potter*. In my pitch book, I did a comparative study of spy movies, boarding school movies, and book-to-film adaptations. With each, I looked up box office performances, rankings in their respective genres, and sequels' performances. The *Harry Potter* series and the *James Bond* films are the two highest grossing franchises in film history. While *Spy School* is on a much smaller scale, being a combination of two of the highest grossing film franchises in box office history makes it a viable product.

After completing this section of the pitch, I began to research companies that Walden could bridge collaboration relationships with in educating children. As the main focus of the novel is spying, I went to both the CIA's and the FBI's websites to look at the resources they have available to eager children wanting to learn more about the profession. I was directed to the Spy Museum, CryptoKids, and Kids.gov. After researching some of the broader themes in the book such as science, math, and engineering I came across the USA Science and

Engineering Festival which hosts children and their inventions every year. Lastly, because Ben's secret skill is supposed to be coding, I researched coding education programs and came across code.com, which seeks to engage the children of tomorrow in an education on how to do basic computer programming and coding. This preliminary research would provide Walden with a listing of companies that might be able to participate in joint grassroots campaigning for an educational blockbuster collaboration.

The last part of my creative process was the most exciting. After compiling all of my research and data, I reevaluated *Spy School* to pull out different topics that would serve children in the age demographic of the book, 9-12 year olds, in schools. After dividing the possibilities by topic, I embarked on creating my own education guide to supplement the release of the film. As cryptography is a basic spy skill and one that is of particular importance in the book, I decided a code-breaking activity would be both engaging and educational. Next, I felt it was important to educate children on the actual government organizations that exist, namely the FBI and the CIA and so I created a quick fact sheet that could be elaborated on depending on the age and grade level of the students receiving it. Later in the packet, I included a code-breaking activity and a pop quiz of the facts at the beginning. While this isn't a completed guide, it served as a good basis for other possibilities that could be created from the range of topics I provided in the educational outreach section of my pitch.

In concluding my pitch, I compiled a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted the key points of my booklet. I gave the presentation on April 2nd, 2013 to Micheal Flaherty, Chip Flaherty, and Evan Rimer.

CHAPTER 8: Findings

Are the companies in the entertainment industry, particularly those companies involved in the book-to-film space, aware of the far-reaching educational implications of taking a children's book and making it into a film? In what ways have entertainment companies fashioned their productions and post-production initiatives around providing educators with useable material? Is this educational responsibility even a concern to companies? In what ways are films different, and yet, still valuable resources in the classroom? What are successful models used to make box-office films educational? And finally, what is the future of book-to-film adaptations in the entertainment sphere, and what is the future of their interplay with education?

Book-to-film adaptations, particularly those in the children's entertainment sphere exist in this intermediary between providing valuable resources and educational lessons while still maintaining entertainment value and box-office success. As this model has existed since the first films were created, it was interesting to gain the perspective of those individuals immersed in this process and responsible for its creation and its dissemination to the public.

For my research portion, I interviewed four industry executives. Micheal Flaherty is the President of Walden Media with offices in both Burlington, MA and Los Angeles, CA. Nikki Silver is the co-founder of Tonik Productions in New York, NY and producer of the famed children's show, *Reading Rainbow*. Barbara Marcus is currently the President of Random House Books and as the former President of Scholastic. Carol Greenwald is a senior executive producer at

WGBH/PBS and the Director of Development for Children's Programming. Collectively these peoples' opinions and my own make up the wealth of my research and findings section.

In the entertainment industry, turning a profit fuels the entire creative process. As I sat down and spoke with some of the most impressive people in this sphere, it became immediately clear through each of their shared experiences that they had all been beaten down by the financial gatekeepers and were, above all, mindful of the for-profit nature of the business they were in.

I think the problem is that in this space, there are people that really care about the books and the literature and then there are people who are just trying to make money and sell tickets. And I think that's always been the case. And I think those of us can identify each other who have a different approach and I think it ebbs and flows depending on how many people are on either side of that coin (Silver, 2013).

This passion for the projects, in turn, is what all of my interviewees accredited their success with.

I think the problem is it's a for-profit business and when you're in a for-profit business you have to get people to see the film. Unfortunately, you get a lot of development that starts to happen where it's more about what do I think will drive people, maybe I should put a teenage romance here even if there wasn't a romance in the book and then, I think it gets harder and harder for producers and directors to stay true to the original mission (Silver, 2013).

Still, what Silver, Flaherty, Marcus, and Greenwald all agreed about was the fact that creating book-to-film adaptations in the children's entertainment sphere drove sales, and that pacified their superiors. "Any way they can market it they do it. I really don't think that they care that much," recalls Flaherty when asked whether or not other executives cared about their properties being interlinked in education (Flaherty, 2013).

Additionally, the educational supplementation that the companies provided has never hurt them financially, instead, in some instances, it increased awareness about their products and reengaged audiences that might not otherwise go out and buy the book or see the subsequent movie.

They definitely increase sales and we have really good data that we can show you about this; it increases ticket sales as well. Opening weekend for *Bridge to Terabithia*, one out of three kids said that their teachers told them to see the movie. So that's when it works out well, I mean we give them books and materials, we make the movie, and if they like it, they'll send the kids to see it" (Flaherty, 2013).

This model however, is often thrown by the wayside for other more glamorous options.

When asked if they knew how their products were being used in the classroom, most only had vague knowledge and most of it was from their own parenting experience. With the shift to the Internet as the primary distribution avenue for educational supplements, most companies were relying on analytics to understand how many people were downloading and were therefore less clear on who those people were or what they were doing with the resources. While companies like Walden and Tonik participate in ALA fairs (and other similar events), it seems like the bridge from media creators to educator could serve to be strengthened. In public television, the gap was smaller however, there too it seemed as though at WGBH and PBS they relied mostly on online distribution routes to parents and librarians.

We launch an outreach program that will be directed at teachers or parents. With *Martha Speaks* we created a book buddies program, which piloted in a bunch of different schools and now is being rolled out nationally. We give teachers a structured program that reinforces the vocabulary learning, you watch a show there's a connected book to it, there are exercises and activities. For every show we've ever done, we've created those kinds of materials, which are distributed on the web under the parents and teachers area. It used to be

that we'd have to print things out and it would be much more expensive. Now we put things out and tell parents they're out there (Greenwald, 2013).

While this method of distribution is cost-effective, it certainly has not been proven. While I did not survey parents and/or teachers, it would be interesting to see how often they go to websites, download, and distribute these sorts of documents.

Creating book-to-film adaptations is a double-edged sword because, on the one hand there is an entire built in audience, but on the other, there is a responsibility to this audience that wouldn't exist with original content. In evaluating the educational responsibility, there was a unique response from each of my interviewees showcasing the widespread difference in opinion on this topic. When asked who should be providing teachers, educators, and librarians with materials to support both the book and the film (upon the film's release), Barbara Marcus responded, "I would say that if it's a film, it is the film company's responsibility. And to be honest, there are companies that do that, that film companies employ. I don't know if they still exist but they used to" (Marcus, 2013). As a publisher of the books being reimaged on screen, Marcus believed film companies than took on the onus of the creation and dissemination of educational supplements.

While everyone agreed that it was not the publisher's responsibility to do this, the other three were less clear on who was in charged. "My perspective on it, as a producer, is probably different than when you talk to the studios, and it is my perspective that it is my job to make sure that whoever is distributing it works with the libraries and the teachers to really get the full effect of it. It's not necessarily what I do, but what I do do is make sure that there is a whole education and outreach beyond whether it's a film or a television show because that's essential"

(Silver, 2013). While Silver, therefore, maintains that she spearheads and oversees the creation of an overarching project, the responsibility seems to be passed off to another person. Flaherty at Walden Media, maintained a fluctuating opinion. He recalled a time where they used to create their own supplements and explained that he wanted to get back to that model however, at the current time felt they didn't have the professionals, the manpower, or the money (Flaherty, 2013). At WGBH/PBS also, the financial demands often seemed to get in the way however, the model that persists there allows them to provide their audience with at least some sort of educational supplement in every instance. As television exists in a different sphere, the power structure is different than in film.

My conclusion as to whose responsibility educational supplements, in line with state standards and distributed on a large scale, fell upon was inconclusive. As smaller production companies do not have the manpower or the money to outsource such undertakings, they instead rely on the distributors. The problem lies in the fact that distributors are often removed from the product and less concerned with its educational value. Distributors look to gain the most profit from the smallest investment and might not see the benefit in putting in so much work for a reward that is not always visible. While companies like PBS/WGBH continue to receive public funding, which they put forth towards creating relationships with outside advisors, other companies like Walden have had to cut the expenses that the financial executives associate with losing investments.

One of the most interesting findings was realized when I posed the question as to whether or not book-to-film adaptations provided educational lessons for

children. With Walden's mission to educate, Flaherty felt strongly that his movies were accomplishing education with or without supplements.

I don't think the promise is just to entertain, there are a lot of companies that do that and they do it better than us. I don't think that you can guarantee if you're going to entertain somebody, I mean, just look at all the movies that bomb. You *can* guarantee that you're going to make a good effort for someone to learn about something that they might not have learned about before (Flaherty, 2013).

Companies therefore, have the power to educate through the creative decisions that companies make in pre-production towards story and purpose. At WGBH/PBS, Greenwald explains,

When we do a project, we generally start with what's the education piece. We will identify a need and then we will find a format to meet the need. My particular interest has always been this adaptation of literature...There was a study done here by Action for Children's Television, an organization founded here in the 70s that said if kids watch television programs based on book, they were more likely to read those books. There was another study that found increased library use. So we were like, if we could encourage kids to read by using television than that's a great way to start (Greenwald, 2013).

This notion of increasing reading is one that every one of my interviewees identified as the most important educational benefits of the book-to-film adaptations.

I will never forget this: we thought we had the most successful book in *Harry Potter* and when we said how many we sold the movie studio was shocked at what a low number it was. I mean the number of people who see a movie compared to the number of people who buy a book is so much greater. So, if you have a successful movie, you will sell a lot of books. A lot more books than you will sell of just a successful book. So yes, a great movie—*Hunger Games*, *Twilight*, and *Harry Potter*—will sell a lot more books. (Marcus 2013).

The reach of a film is so much larger than that of a book that it has the capability to bring in more readers, which is intrinsically good for any book property. While Marcus continued by saying that if the book didn't have an educational purpose than the movie probably would not either, she did cite the example of *The Hunger Games*

increase in sales as a testament to expanding an audience (Marcus 2013). Flaherty, too, recalls the specific example of *Harry Potter* as an incredible push towards reading after the films were released.

Coollest thing I ever saw, and this is when I knew it was a big deal, I was going to see the first *Hulk*, the Ang Lee *Hulk*, here at the Burlington movie theater, and I was nervous it was going to be sold out. It was opening night and there was this line going all the way around the corner and I was like this many people are here to see the Hulk?? Instead, it was the line for one of the *Harry Potter* books (at the Barnes and Nobles next door). That's when it hit me what a phenomenon it had become. I'm sure kids were walking out of there with more than just a *Harry Potter* book. So she got kids to go into the bookstore and start to look around. I think her contribution to reading is one of the biggest of the last 100 years; it's amazing (Flaherty, 2013).

Silver also spoke to the benefit of partnerships, explaining that from a marketing standpoint, both the publishing and the film company would be smart to bridge a connection between the book and the film (Silver, 2013).

Another takeaway from book-to-film adaptations was tied into the notion of storytelling. While everyone was primarily concerned with educational components of the books their companies were involved in adapting, they also believed in them for the merits of good story telling. "For kids, a lot of times, it's the reading a book that's scary. When you take that away and make it a story, kid's love stories, and I think that's what adaptations should be able to do, to say look, we're taking stories, it's no different if you read a story or you watch a story, it's a great story" (Silver, 2013).

When Greenwald started in this business over 20 years ago, she remembers the motivation being to expose children to classic stories they weren't necessarily being exposed to. When asked to site the positives of making the adaptations she said, "I think the positives are really clear to me, which is you expose a lot more kids to the

book you encourage kids to do. The research tells us that kids actually go look for those books and read them” (Greenwald, 2013). Additionally, Greenwald negated the often felt criticism of book-to-film adaptations that children might not read the books by saying, “I do believe that adding another layer to something makes its more- doesn’t mean that kids are only going to see the show or read the books I think you’re making more of the whole” (Greenwald, 2013). Flaherty, too, chimed in on this idea in saying, “I think the story is intrinsically educational. As long as you do a faithful telling of the book your job is done, anything over that is gravy. I think the best litmus test is: have you interested the kid enough to go out and buy the book. So in that way it’s the films responsibilities to alert the kid that there is a book” (Flaherty, 2013). In continuing on about the additional layer that films can provide, he spoke to the merits of visual representation of things by citing an example from the *Narnia* series.

My favorite scene in *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* is something that’s not in the book but it really speaks to Lucy’s character. She wakes up in the middle of the night and she puts on her boots and the whole idea is that she knows there’s a whole world in the wardrobe and I know its going to be snowing so I better be prepared. So that to me really showed her confidence more than anything in the book. Visually, I like getting things wordlessly so absolutely I think it can be done (Flaherty, 2013).

In explaining why she felt so passionately about making book-to-film adaptations, Silver summed up the general consensus of the group in saying, “When you start a project that is book based, and this is the reason I believe in book based projects, they’re just great stories, and I’m not saying there cant be great stories made from scratch but there are so many stories out there looking to be told” (Silver, 2013).

After recognizing the pros of making book-to-film blockbusters, I was curious to understand the cons associated with this process. While most agreed that the financial risks associated with the undertaking were the biggest negatives, another key point was whether or not a bad movie contributed negatively to a good book. Surprisingly, Marcus in publishing had the most positive outlook on this.

I think there's a whole list of bad movies that have been made. I don't think they hurt a good book. *Eragon*, here, was a bad movie, there's another fantasy movie that was made from a Scholastic book, but there are tons of bad movies that are made that I don't think hurt a successful book. So I don't think that it's a bad thing, one would hope that that doesn't happen, but I don't think that that hurts the book (Marcus, 2013).

Greenwald at WGBH, felt differently than Marcus about the potential for a film to effect book sales.

I do think a negative adaptation contributes negatively. If there's a book series where people aren't connecting the books to the TV, then there's nothing you can do about it. If it's a good book and a bad movie, I think it really does hurt the book. The good thing about a movie is that it comes and it goes. Even though movies have penetration, in absolute numbers it doesn't completely blow the numbers if you have a bad movie. I do think it can hurt book sales though (Greenwald, 2013).

Like Greenwald, others too felt that Hollywood could ruin a property. Unlike Greenwald and Marcus however, Silver and Flaherty spoke to other problematic trends that have and could continue to come with adaptations.

When anything becomes formulaic it becomes a con. I think Hollywood just has the tendency to do that because everybody's looking, it's a very different business today especially the film business. It's all about the first weekend at the box office. It used to be your movie had time to grow, now if you don't get your numbers the first weekend your movies done. I think one of the advantages of book-based projects is that you have a built in audience in advance. The problem is I think people are doing things in the adaptations to make them trailer worthy and opening weekend worthy. You're finding a lot more sci-fi as opposed to just great quality stories (Silver, 2013).

The Hollywood trends are something that everyone was very aware of. Greenwald also spoke to this by saying, ““I think when one thing is successful, twenty-five people jump on and try to do the same thing. There are no new ideas. I think it’s about finding things that appeal to kids and wanting to take advantage of those” (Greenwald, 2013). Silver, again, summed up the general sentiment in her closing remarks on the negatives of the industry shift.

In how it’s changed, I think right now we’re in a really good period. I would put a lot of that on *The Hunger Games*, *Twilight*, and *Harry Potter*. There’s been a lot of successful young adult series and so I think you see the studios buying up content right now because they believe they’re looking for the next one of those. That’s the great side, that there’s interest. It’s probably easier to sell projects that you couldn’t before. I think the bad side of that is it will lose its individuality to some degree. So everybody’s trying to make the next x or the next y instead of taking each project on its uniqueness and its creativity (Silver, 2013).

In commenting on the future of the industry, everyone spoke to these trends and how they would persist. From the publisher’s perspective, Marcus had a lot to say.

There was an article I read recently about the screenwriter in the golden days of Hollywood and what’s happening now. Right now, buying books for films is very hot...Think about what you just saw this year *Life of Pi*, *Lincoln*, *Silver Linings Playbook*, they’re all based on books. So right now, people are looking to books as the basis for film or true events—*Argo*, *Zero Dark Thirty*—so you’re having this interesting moment of books being seen as a better basis for film. So that’s a new event which is great for the book business and I don’t see that changing in the future because I think that they’re really good full basis for film and I think that what has happened is there has been great success. Some of the most successful films in the last couple of years have been box office films, maybe not completely successful films as far as artistic films, but box office films have been based on books. Maybe part of that is because there’s a core audience they know will go see them if they pick the right books and then they can build on it, but I do believe that that will continue. (Marcus, 2013).

Flaherty agreed with Marcus’s hypothesis, proclaiming that the big push for book-to-film adaptations had already begun. “I think it’s going to stay the same. It’s going to be franchise driven. Studios aren’t going to take chances off of one book, they like

the idea of an investment into a franchise where they can build a world and sell merchandise. My hope is that there's just more of them and that they're lower budget" (Flaherty, 2013). Silver, like Marcus, found the trend to be a positive one however, sited the media-infused generation of children as the culprit.

I mean look, for better or for worse, kids love television and film and I think that's just a given. To fight that is silly. Yes, I'm a mom too and I want my kids to be reading but I think being able to show a great film that's based on a book and to say its based on this book, by the way here's another book that's just like that, I think that's how we encourage kids to read. I personally am not a huge proponent of showing a film in class instead of teaching; to me that's sort of lazy teaching. On the other hand, from an extra curricular perspective, to be able to say, for a teacher to say ok you all saw Narnia now lets read C.S. Lewis, so what's different about the book and the movie you saw which opens up a whole new realm of opportunities for teachers that will engage kids who would otherwise, if they were just reading out of the book, would not.

The truly innovative response however, came from Greenwald who has been involved in this trend the longest. As television adaptations are not as lucrative as they once were and are often overlooked for more glamorous film deals, Greenwald has had to start to evaluate the future of her business, more so than some of her film and publishing counterparts.

I think that all of these platforms are going to come together because you're going to be able to market to end users, there's not going to be a TV station or a movie theater its going to come directly to you as a consumer. Everybody—publishers, producers, and media---has to start thinking creatively. I don't really have the answers but I think that this is the biggest challenge we've got because the way that people are getting content is changing. The thing that isn't changing is that good content is going to be the thing that wins out. The people with the good content, we have to make sure we partner with the good content and get the good content and figure out the ways to present it (Greenwald, 2013).

Greenwald felt very strongly that the distribution channels were shifting and partnerships would be the key to success.

One of the biggest shifts has already started to happen. While movie companies continue to acquire the rights to books, publishing companies are getting keener on the profits that they can make on these ventures. Both Scholastic and Random House, the two companies Marcus has worked for, have their own media branches. When asked about their creation, she replied,

Well that basically happened for all the reasons you're sort of sussing out. It does become a little frustrating to be the person that publishes a book, makes a book very successful, clearly the author's the one who makes the book very successful because they write the book but, in partnership with the author the publisher often has a hand in making a book successful. What happens is, quite often, then a movie company can come in and take that success and go run with it. What was felt at Scholastic was that there was an opportunity for some of that success to stay with our company. So Scholastic chose to, and it was a very different time where television, children's television, had the opportunity for one to make money—that had sort of changed in the last couple of years but there was a time where television was lucrative—make something called *The Magic Schoolbus*, which was a television show that was very very successful. We not only made money on the show, but also had the opportunity to sell a lot more books, and some merchandise...*Goosebumps*, again a television show, where the books became more successful, they were very successful but became more successful, as did the television show and made the company lots more money. So there's an instance where all the money got to stay with the company (Marcus, 2013).

In conclusion, the business surrounding book-to-film adaptations is changing, as it has been for the past few decades and will continue to do in the coming ones. While media companies continue to navigate their responsibilities to their viewers in relation to their obligations to their financiers, the hope of those companies involved in the children's book-to-film adaptation space is that teachers, students, parents, and librarians will be the ones who benefit. While the motivations in Hollywood are different and oftentimes skewed, one thing is clear, children's book-to-film adaptations is a very lucrative business venture and one that is not going to be going anywhere in the coming years. Additionally, while educational

supplements seem to fall to the wayside, the growing connection between platforms will encourage these ventures to start up again and strengthen, especially as partnerships between different groups becomes stronger. The money motivation in Hollywood isn't always a good thing, particularly as it relates to story, cliché, and repetition however, it also provides for a growing library of resources that will contribute to children's educations and increase the layers of a story. The visual medium has its merits, the most promising one being that it increases children to go out and read the book. From Scholastic to Walden and Tonik to PBS/WGBH, the general attitude of the companies' executives was towards increasing educational value and entertainment at the same time, as they should go hand in hand with one another in a successful property. Children's book-to-film ventures have been some of the highest-ranking box-office films of all time and because of this, they will continue to be created and hopefully, by those people who value them and the stories they tell.

CHAPTER 10: Conclusion/Self Reflective Statement

As an Interdisciplinary Studies Major, I feel as though my thesis was four years in the making because of the nature of my coursework. Still, the past few months have been incredibly challenging as I plugged into my research and actually crafted my senior thesis. From the second I finished my freshman internship at Walden and chose Child Development as the secondary focus in the creation of my major, I immersed myself in book-to-film adaptations. While I was able to learn a lot of valuable things from my Independent Study courses and internships, it wasn't until I wrote this thesis that I was able to actually understand all that I had learned.

Children's adaptation studies is a field that deserves to be highlighted, especially as these movies, plays, games, and other media continue to be created and utilized in children's every day lives. I was surprised to learn how little research existed on children's interaction with media, especially since there are so many people who are currently speaking against it. While my ventures at Tufts have, at times been very pre-professional, my thesis really allowed me to study and explore the areas of interest that I started my collegiate experience looking to learn about.

While Piaget, Gerbner, McLuhan, and Bandura have theories that relate to the overarching themes in children's book-to-film adaptations which helped to provide a theoretical framework for my studies, these notions become oversimplified and stretched to meet the needs of this emerging genre of children's study. The media literacy debate in the United States continues to be

particularly relevant to these studies as the integration of media into the classroom is the next step in bringing this topic into the limelight. Additionally, with the continued struggle, more educators, policymakers, and entertainment executives alike are becoming more aware of the ramifications and benefits of these properties. As Generation M grows older, it will be particularly interesting to see how future teachers and media makers bridge the types of bonds that my interviewees spoke of to create a multifunctioning system that is mutually beneficial.

As in the case of Walden and Scholastic, companies have, in the last few decades, realized both the profitability and responsibility required in this genre. While the trends are positive as far as production of book-to-film adaptations, the caveat becomes, as all of my findings suggested, the overabundance and cookie cutter lack of quality that rears its head in the case of crazes and fads. While those who are passionate about producing quality over quantity will continue to exist, the division becomes starker and starker as the trends demonstrate. With products such as *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games* creating models for the future, other publishers, authors, production companies, and distributors understand what they are capable of and what the reward is for all, but specifically for the consumer, when done correctly. As children's literature continues to be made for niche audiences, it is up to media companies and publishers to create an understanding of the source material that services the original work and its adapted format.

Lastly, while media literacy continues to be a struggle, media companies, publishers, educators, and parents alike are not capitalizing on the educational power of movies. While publishers believe it is media companies responsibilities, media companies are not equipped nor, in some cases, as passionate or able to make supplements available. The direct links between purveyors of books, books, and movies needs to be strengthened through the reinvigoration of supplemental material that services all the products. This dearth is the most problematic part of the business that has the potential to make money while still educating and providing quality movies to its consumer base.

Having conducted all of my research, I was able to discover the right questions to ask. Had I not studied previous successes, companies in the industry, the current state of media education and literacy in the United States, and the theories that support why these are important, I would not have been able to create meaningful interviews nor would I have been able to articulate why *Spy School* is the perfect book-to-film adaptation that has yet to be made.

In addition to the research that I compiled, the actual pitch process could use some revamping. In my presentation, my supervisors were blown away with the quality and content of my work. The lazy attitudes adopted by the industry at large seem to be immobilized by fear and overstepping. As it is often said in Hollywood, "movies never make money," and because of this notion, no one is willing to take a chance on a good story. Instead, the focus becomes on, especially in the area of book-to-film adaptation, whether or not the concept

already has a stronghold and/or following and if the production of the movie is inexpensive. Still, it is those who push past these bounds that are truly innovative and make the biggest difference, both economically and creatively.

While I did not find *Spy School* (it found me), the absolute most important thing to look for when adapting a literary book, especially for children, is visual representation in words. Books that happen through conversations instead of actions don't materialize into good screen visual adaptations. Additionally, while companies of recent seem to be trying to find a book that meets their needs, they need to go back to the basics of looking for good stories. Instead of trying to force fit the next dystopian story, find a story with heart and it will gain traction. *Harry Potter* was revolutionary because it was new and exciting as was *The Hunger Games* and its risqué topic, one that had been taboo in children's film before. As many of the people I talked to concluded, children's book-to-film adaptations, at their hearts, are just really really good stories waiting to be told, and anything that is a good story is inherently educational. While companies get preoccupied with filling quota for certain types of characters and lessons, good stories encourage reading and inevitably have a lot of the requisite necessities of some of the forced projects.

In addition to a good story, quirky, unique characters that are reminiscent of others but different in their own way are essential to entertaining a large audience base. Creative characters in conjunction with colorful, familiar, and/or zany settings make for a vibrant story that translates into film. Additionally, something I found particularly interesting during my pitch was, as I was listing

the characters before even introducing the story, I was immediately probed about a love story. This element is important to meet the four quadrants audience, males and females over and under 25. Any story that appeals to all these groups is one that will do very well at the box office.

While my research seems, at least to me, extensive; it also is barely piercing the surface of what there is to learn about children's book-to-film adaptations. If I had more time and resources I would have reached out to teachers, parents, and even children with some of the same questions. The biggest problem with my research is that it does not go to the source to find out what is actually being used and in what ways. While companies can guess based on how many click downloads their supplements get or how many conferences they attend, until actual teachers, librarians, and parents are surveyed as to their usage and willingness to logon to websites and/or use movies educationally in conjunction with books, the research isn't as strong. Additionally, had I had more time, I would have expanded the study to talk to more people in both publishing and media to get a true sense of where the trend is headed, what kind of changes have already occurred, and, most importantly, why. Though my interviewees were incredibly insightful and honest, having a larger basis of people to gather opinions from would have contributed to a more comprehensive study.

In regard to my pitch process, the next phase would involve a marketing rollout plan that would include the educational supplement. Very important to this process would be a marketing plan that engages on every platform, both digital means, as in the successful case of *The Hunger Games* and tangible ways

such as those that Scholastic employs to reach their audience. Additionally, figuring out how to tie in digital eBooks into marketing and education could provide an edge to the marketing of this project that hasn't been completely tapped into. Perhaps the addition of an app that could target the audience of the book and the film would service this project in the months leading up to its release. Still, my pitch process went incredibly well as detailed in the next few paragraphs.

After finishing my presentation, Mike Flaherty discussed the different options to proceed and asked whether or not I thought the product might work for television or if it was too expensive. He agreed that their current sponsors, Wal-Mart, would love the premise and merchandising available. Mike has agreed to take the next steps into buying the rights for Walden and has told me that if the product does get made, I will get a producer's credit. Additionally, the company was so impressed with my work that they wanted their employees to emulate some of my means of presenting material and educational supplementation. I also discussed the option of involving Tufts Child Development School in helping compile future educational material for their projects as a mutually beneficial relationship. All in all, the presentation went pretty perfectly, and hopefully the project will get picked up.]

My biggest qualm about the creative process was the format in which Walden is hoping to adapt *Spy School*. While I think that it is a fairly malleable premise, I do think that the box office potential for this story is there and to make it into a TV movie or a television series might lessen this effect. While I think the story is

great, I think the trailer and marketing that comes with a box office film might help a premise like *Spy School* really gain traction whereas if it premieres on TV, I'm afraid no one will know about it or maintain interest. While I recognize Walden is switching their model to make TV content, I do hope that they will at least consider the box office potential.

At the end of my presentation, Mike and Chip turned to Evan and asked if they could give me an A+. While I am only an intern, I hope the project resonated with them like it did with me.

As I reflect on my thesis, I can only first say, "WAHOOLIGANS! It's done!" After thinking about how much I have put into it, I do not know what I will do with all of my free time except to say that my education on this topic will not stop here. While I hope that my thesis provides a comprehensive understanding of a topic that I am truly passionate about, it is only the beginning of this study for me. As a freshman, I had no idea what a thesis entailed and even half-way into my senior year, I was still a little unclear on what exactly I would be undergoing in the following semester however, I am very proud of the work that I have done. Thank you for taking the time to read this hefty document; I hope that you've laughed, you've cried, and you've learned something as well. I certainly did.

CHAPTER 11: Acknowledgments

Through my thesis I have met incredible, powerful, and passionate people in the field that I hope to one day also make an impact in. I want to thank all of them, Micheal Flaherty, Barbara Marcus, Carol Greenwald, and Nikki Silver, for taking the time to talk to me as I know how busy their day-to-day lives are and how much they are doing each day. I admire their work and their dedication to creating good, quality content and I can only hope that my first venture into pitching a book-to-film adaptation through this process was as admirable as I think most of the things that they have produced are.

I would also be remiss if I didn't specifically thank each of my advisors who have guided me on this journey. Julie, you have been with me since literally my first day at Tufts and you have always kept my best interest in mind and helped me to achieve every crazy, convoluted plan I sprung on you. Whether I was sending you frantic e-mails late at night or showing up on your office door, I value the relationship we have built over the years. You have made my Tufts experience incredibly valuable and unique and I cannot thank you enough for that. Chip, even though most of my e-mails to you end in some sort of plea to answer me, you've provided me with perspective and wisdom on this topic that I could not have otherwise included. You helped me fuel the crazy ideas (which I then fed to Julie) and your interest in my topic helped me reengage with it when the workload was enough to keep me away. Barbara, you have been my rock as you are constantly encouraging and helpful in providing a different perspective, allowing me to embrace creativity and pitch something I never in my wildest

dreams though I would be able to do before I even graduated college. Finally, Evan, I do not even have the words to thank you for the incredible mentorship you have provided. You have seen me through school, work, extracurricular, and everything in between and I truly look up to you as a friend, colleague, and student. You have really helped me grow and taught me everything I needed to know to embark on my next step to Los Angeles. Thank you so much for working with me throughout this process and for guiding me to its completion, I can honestly say that without each and every one of you, I would not be able to have accomplished something so incredible.

Lastly I would like to especially thank Walden Media for being my home away from home over these past four years. As the company has grown and changed, so have I, and I have really been able to emerge myself into the media business in a city that isn't exactly the hub of it. Thank you for providing me with guidance and insight into this world and for taking me in and letting me overstay my welcome. Thank you to Chip and Mike for hearing my pitch and providing constructive feedback and taking it seriously. Thank you to Evan for arranging everything and for sneaking me under the radar for my 3-semester stay. You guys have been truly incredible.

CHAPTER 12: Appendixes**Appendix A:****Interview Questions:**

1. How did your company get into the business of children's movies/education?
2. What responsibilities to your viewers do you feel you have? Educational? Cultural? Entertainment wise?
3. How is the book-to-film space different from children's movies without a book associated with them?
 - a. How did your company start in this business?
 - b. How has it evolved over time?
4. In what ways does your company engage education- teachers, librarians, publishers, supplemental materials, etc? Is this required? An obligation? To increase sales?
5. What ramifications are there associated with turning a book into a movie? Identify negatives and positives of this trend.
6. Do you feel that media companies, educational institutions, or publishers are responsible for the ramifications of making movies of books?
7. How has this business evolved over time? How do you see it changing in the future?
8. What are the risks associated with making book-to-film adaptations from an entertainment standpoint? In what instance do the cons outweigh the pros?
 - a. How do you counter these risks?
9. How does money play into the equation?
10. What is different about this market than others? Why has it become so much more popular of recent?
11. What are the differences of when a movie is wildly popular and inextricably linked to a movie (i.e. Harry Potter) versus distinct properties (Holes/Narnia) vs. one favored over the other (unfaithful adaptations etc.)?
12. What do these shared values versus distinct differences lend to the classroom?
13. What do children, specifically, benefit from these films?
 - a. Are there different benefits that can be gained from the film versus the book versus having both?
14. Are you aware of how your film is being used educationally- in classrooms or by educators- to teach?

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