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Skip to Main Content Cancel About Rotten Tomatoes Critics Wants to See Ratings Profile Account Log Out Movies Movies in theaters Movies at Home More Certified fresh picks TV Shows New TV Tonight View All Most Popular TV on RT View All More Certified fresh pick 74% Adults: Season 1 Link to Adults: Season 1 FanStore New News Critics Guides View All Hubs View All RT News View All Showtimes 24% Tomatometer 260 Reviews 81% Popcornmeter 2,500+ Ratings A Yale Law student drawn back to his Appalachian hometown reflects on his family's history and his own future. Watch on Netflix Stream Now Netflix Watch Hillbilly Elegy with a subscription on Netflix. Critics Consensus With the form of an awards-season hopeful but the soul of a bland melodrama, Hillbilly Elegy strands some very fine actors in the not-so-deep South. Read Critics Reviews Charles Bramesco Inside Hook Why did Amy Adams and Glenn Close choose to do such a bad movie? Sep 21, 2021 Full Review Alana Anttoni Bitch Media Hillbilly Elegy is objectively terrible. Dec 10, 2020 Full Review Wenlei Ma News.com.au Adams and Close deserved better than this relentlessly gloomy, often trite, movie. We all did. Rated: 1.5/5 Dec 8, 2020 Full Review Geoffrey Macnab INews.com A dreary grind. Rated: 2/5 Jan 16, 2025 Full Review Ricardo De Querol El Pais (Spain) ... The film remains an almost pornographic exhibition of a mother's collapse and an immodest presentation of Vance himself as a self-made hero. [Full review in Spanish] Aug 7, 2024 Full Review Matt Brinson Film Frenzy Compared to Glenn Close's Grandma Hillbilly – excuse me, Mamaw – even Ruth Gondons foul-mouthed bellowing as Ma in Every Which Way But Loose looks positively summable. Rated: 2/4 Jul 27, 2024 Full Review Read all reviews Dana Ron Howard nails life in rural Appalachia. I dont see how rotten could score this movie so low. Glenn Close should be nominated for an oscar. Amy Adams continues to amaze me with her range as an actress. It hit home. Rated 5/5 Stars Rated 5 out of 5 stars 11/24/20 Full Review Susie Great movie! Definitely on the heavy side but actors and casting were excellent! Rated 5/5 Stars Rated 5 out of 5 stars 11/24/20 Full Review James M W Roberts (great acting) Rated 3/5 Stars Rated 3 out of 5 stars 11/16/20 Full Review Kenneth C Good acting and message. 4.5 Stars Rated 4 out of 5 stars 10/31/21 Full Review Cindy Devine I took from the book, which is a thoroughly enjoyed. Rated 3/5 Stars Rated 3 out of 5 stars 10/31/21 Full Review Carol This movie had so much potential but it quickly became marred with trying to include too many details. The characters were strong but they got lost in the overly detailed storytelling. The last 20 mins were by far the best part of the movie and it's redemption. Rated 3/5 Stars Rated 3 out of 5 stars 11/04/21 Full Review Read all reviews Read More Read Less POST RATING WRITE A REVIEW EDIT REVIEW Hillbilly Elegy: Movie Clip - Be Somebody Hillbilly Elegy: Movie Clip - Be Somebody 1:03 View more videos The Hand of God 84% 76% The Hand of God Watchlist TRAILER for The Hand of God The White Tiger 91% 79% The White Tiger Watchlist TRAILER for The White Tiger Marriage Story 95% 85% Marriage Story Watchlist TRAILER for Marriage Story Strange Weather 58% 56% Strange Weather Watchlist TRAILER for Strange Weather The Roads Not Taken 44% 27% The Roads Not Taken Watchlist TRAILER for The Roads Not Taken Discover more movies and TV shows. View More Hillbilly Elegy: Trailer 1 Hillbilly Elegy: Trailer 1 2:16 View more videos Hillbilly Elegy (2020) View more photos Most Popular at Home Now - Tap to Unmute See Details It didnt start with her. Thats the most penetrating thing said about Bev (Amy Adams), the frazzled maternal trainwreck who makes everyones life miserable in Ron Howards Hillbilly Elegy. Bev is a parasite, an addict, a narcissist, and a desperate user of others, notably her own family. In a word, shes a mess. Her son, J.D. (Gabriel Basso), attends Yale Law School and is in the midst of auditioning for a summer internship, but now hes got to go back to Middletown, Ohio, the Midwestern backwater hes from, and jump through hoops to get his mother into rehab. He foots the bill for a week-long stay on four credit cards, only to learn that Bev has no interest in going into rehab. A former nurse who trashed her career when she roller-skated, high as a kite, through the corridors of a hospital, shes been shooting heroin, and she seems to be going down fast. She doesnt want help; shed rather stew in her toxic juice of pain and self-hat. But no, it didnt start with her. Does it? Hillbilly Elegy, an adaptation of J.D. Vances 2016 memoir, is about an extended family mired in dysfunction, though the reason the book became a number one bestseller is that it took us into the realm of something far more bleakly dystopian: the mere dysfunction. Bev Vance and her family come from Breathitt County, Kentucky, and the book was a deep dive into the mystique of Appalachia the back-country ways of tradition and loyalty, but also the poverty and violence and addiction, the abuse and social disintegration that have been accepted, far too readily, as part of that legacy. Hillbilly Elegy, in other words, was a primal X-ray into the soul of Trump country (or, at least, a central part of it), and the books appeal is that it showcased that culture in a way that was both voyeuristic and intimate. Strip right up, it seemed to be saying. Heres what the modern American hillbilly experience is really about: the good, the bad, and the backwoods ugly. Hillbilly Elegy the movie is one of those dramas made by the Ron Howard whos drawn, at least in theory, to edgy material. Hard drinking, domestic violence, suicide, all-around eerie viciousness. The movie is an American Gothic redneck soap opera, built to showcase the cussed flamboyance of characters like Mamaw (Glenn Close), the foul-mouthed, mean-as-a-rattlesnake hill-country grandmother who raised J.D. (with her mottled skin, oversized glasses, and unflinching scowl, shes like Ma Barker meets Tyler Perrys Drama meets Pauls grandfather in A Hard Days Night), and Bev, whos your basic, everyday working-class addict and self-hating loser a woman who wears her despair on her pasty, bloated face. You could put it another way, of course, and say that Glenn Close and Amy Adams, in a movie like this one, are all upheld up for their Oscar close-ups. Its the acting-as-transformation-into-human-troll school. Except that the actors, in this case, hit true notes. They communicate the inner agony of what it feels like to be her in it didnt start with her.The book took off just as Trump took office. The movie, coming at the end of his reign, could have felt (no pun intended) like a deliverance: a true-life tale that takes the Appalachian heart of darkness and lays it bare. Except that theres a weird, blind flaw at the center of this adaptation. Ron Howard knows how to flirt with edge, but hes drawn, by temperament, to healing and redemption, to the urgency of people who mean well. Adapted by the screenwriter Vanessa Taylor, who cowrote The Shape of Water, Hillbilly Elegy starts at its screwed-up yoked characters from the outside in, but its most comfortable riding along with J.D., who in the book was grappling with his own psychological and emotional legacy, but who in the movie just comes off as a big, bearish, wholesome hunk of good intentions a young man whos the soul of decency stuck in a made-for-TV My mom was a junkie! melodrama.How did J.D. claw his way from Middletown to Yale? Were not entirely sure, though we know that he got there, and that he has a soulfully intelligent Indian girlfriend, Usha (Freida Pinto), whos devoted to him, whos not so much a suspense about whether he figured out how to transcend his past. The film keeps flashing back to J.D. as a teenager in the mid-90s, where hes played as a saturnine geek by Owen Asztalos. But these parts of the movie have a sketchbook didacticism. J.D., its suggested, gets lost because his mother flits from one man to the next; when she marries on a whim, he winds up with a druggie delinquent stepbrother. A scene or two later, he has fallen into delinquency himself, a transformation that is less than convincing, though it roots the redemptive buddy-movie part of the film, when J.D. moves in with Mamaw, who lives up the block in Middletown. She becomes his tough-love life coach, and makes it her mission to set the boy straight. She may be a nasty old granny varmint who dresses in sweaters that make her look like she was knitted right into them, but shes got discipline. Not to mention a colorfully nasty line for every occasion. When she says Kiss my ruby-red ass, its not an insult for her, its a declaration of joy. And dont get her started on outrageous ethnic generalizations. Native Americans? Theyre called Indians, explains Mamaw. Like the Cleveland Indians. And they dont know more than other people. Theyre not magic just cause they dont have microwaves. The message is that out of a heart this hard come a love stern enough to heal.As long as Close is acting up an award-worthy storm (her performance is actually quite meticulous), Hillbilly Elegy is never less than alive. Adams does some showpiece acting of her own, but as skillful as her performance is, she never gets us to look at Bev with pity and terror. What we should feel is, The gods will judge you and self-hat. But no, it didnt start with her. Does it? Hillbilly Elegy, an adaptation of J.D. Vances 2016 memoir, is about an extended family mired in dysfunction, though the reason the book became a number one bestseller is that it took us into the realm of something far more bleakly dystopian: the mere dysfunction. Bev Vance and her way of my career path? Not if he wont let them their wont. That isnt quite drama its feel-good therapy.Was the book better than the movie? Lisa M. Hendey reviews the movie adaptation of Hillbilly Elegy. While I dont remember the exact year of my younger sisters graduation from a well-known Southern university, I do remember some of the opening words of the commencement speaker, authorJohn Grisham:“The book is always better than the movie.”When it comes to Netflixs soon to be released film of J.D. Vances 2016 memoirHillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis, I have to say that Grishams assessment and my personal bias hold up. This being said, I still strongly recommend watching director Ron Howards adaptation if for nothing more than to see Glenn Close captivatinr turn as tough-as-naails granny Mamaw.Based on the bestselling memoir by J.D. Vance,HILLBILLY ELEGYis a modern exploration of the American Dream and three generations of an Appalachian family as told by its youngest member, a Yale Law student forced to return to his hometown.Synopsis:J.D. Vance (Gabriel Basso), a former Marine from southern Ohio and current Yale Law student, is on the verge of landing his dream job when a family crisis forces him to return to the home hes tried to forget. J.D. must navigate the complex dynamics of his Appalachian family, including his volatile relationship with his mother Bev (Amy Adams), whos struggling with addiction. Fueled by memories of his grandmother Mamaw (Glenn Close), the resilient and whip-smart woman who raised him, J.D. comes to embrace his familys indelible imprint on his own personal journey. Based on J.D. Vances #1 New York Times Bestseller, directed by Academy Award-winner Ron Howard and produced by Academy Award winner Ben Grazer, HILLBILLY ELEGY is a powerful personal memoir that offers a window into one familys personal journey of survival amid triumph. By following three colorful generations through their unique struggles, J.D.s family very explores the highs and lows that define his familys experience.Source: In many ways,Hillbilly Elegyis tough to watch. Expect to witness a physical abuse of children and spouses, intravenous drug use, and a rather one-dimensional look at the predicament of rural poverty. This being said, if it has a major complaint about the film, it is that it actually doesnt really enough for me in a very real way. Howard and screenwriter Vanessa Taylor have made choices to pretty up what is anything but a feel-good family story. In a way, their artistic decisions are consistent with what Vance himself fed us about his life. Take a look at the books Amazon reviews and youll find all sorts of contentious dialogue about Vances unfair treatment of those from this region of the country. Although Ive personally never written a memoir, I do imagine that there is a fair amount of storytelling involved in to fill in the nooks and crannies of ones memory. Vance is ultimately the hero of his own story, helped along the way by Mamaws tough stand-in parenting and the unconditional love of his girlfriend Usha.One of my major problems withHillbilly Elegyis its treatment of Vances mothers descent into hardcore drug addiction. Its almost physically painful to witness how J.D.s love for his long-suffering mom Bev (Amy Adams) survives her neglect of him and his sister, her walzing through many relationships without regard for her kids, and her absolute inability to accept help when she hits the bottom of the barrel. Anyone who knows and loves an addict might say that as tough as this path is, the film actually makes Bevs addiction and behavior look a bit too clean and tidy. I will say though that Amy Adams is stellar and believable as a mom who bitterly believes that her own legacy was clipped far too short by an unintended teenage pregnancy.CLICK TO TWEETIt @Netflix version of @JDVance1s @HillbillyElegy is a look at family, @LisAHendey shares her take on @RonHoward's directorial choices and awesome stars Glenn Close and Amy Adams #HillbillyElegyHaving made these comments, I strongly recommendHillbilly Elegynot for its basis in reality, but for its look at the complex of family. In using the setting of Appalachia, the film instead of depicting a rural, poor, and isolated center stage. There is no single definition of what it means to be a family. Familial experiences are a mix of triumphs and the most terrible trials. Sometimes they implore and destroy themselves. Sometimes seems to be the case in Vances real family they defy the odds, band together, and survive in watchingHillbilly Elegy. I found myself able to associate with elements of many of the characters.Ive been J.D. the striver who benefits from the cumulative love and sacrifice of those who helped him get where hes active been Mamaw, the mean mom willing to make hard choices to see her brood have a chance at a brighter future;ve been Bev, the broken, who knows the right thing to do but cant seem to do it;ve been Lindsay, the big sister who tries her best to help hold all of the pieces together and Ive been Lindsay;v by my younger siblings who have done the very same for me.Family is complex. Family requires a dedication to circumstances that sometimes seem totally illogical or impossible. Family means having people around you who love you despite your own messiness. Family is forever you may choose to walk away, but you are still always a part of your family.One dictionary definition of the word elegy fits nicely with the vision of Netflixs Oscar-buzzy song of the South, Miriam-Websters a poem of serious reflection, typically a lament for the dead fits in here.For me,Hillbilly Elegyis, in its best moments, ultimately a song of memories, of miracles, and of Mamaw.Rated R for language throughout, drug content and some violence. Hillbilly Elegy opened November 24, 2020 on Netflix. Copyright 2020 Lisa M. HendeyImmages copyright Lacey Terrell/NETFLIX 2020This article contains Amazon affiliate links: your purchases through these links benefit the author. By Amy Renner Nov. 1, 2020 When you buy through links on our site, we may earn a commission. As an Amazon Associate, we earn from qualifying purchases. The story begins in Jackson, Kentucky in 1997, where J.D. is reflecting on his teenage years while visiting his family, including his grandparents and his mother, Bev. They eventually return to their home in Ohio.Fast forward fourteen years, J.D. is now attending Yale and managing three jobs while raising a young woman named Usha, whos secured a summer internship in Washington D.C. Eager to follow in her footsteps, he attends an event to network for an internship opportunity. However, his plans take a sudden turn as he receives the call from his sister, Lindsay. She informs him that their mother, Bev, has overdosed on heroin, bridging the past and present in a battle against his familys struggles.ProducerCasting DepartmentAdditional CrewKaren Lunder is President of Imagine Features and heads Imagine's feature film development and production. She recently oversaw The Spy Who Dumped Me. Prior to joining Imagine in 2017, Karen was EVP of Production for Film Nation. Over her career she has produced, developed and overseen a variety of award winning and commercial successes, including Marc Webb's Gifted, Denis Villeneuve's Arrival, John Lee Hancock's The Founder, Gavin Hood's Eye In The Sky and The Blind Side among others.Suggest an edit or add missing contentYou have no recently viewed pages Cast & crewUser reviewsTriviaFAQAn urgent phone call pulls a Yale Law student back to his Ohio hometown, where he reflects on three generations of family history and his own future.An urgent phone call pulls a Yale Law student back to his Ohio hometown, where he reflects on three generations of family history and his own future.An urgent phone call pulls a Yale Law student back to his Ohio hometown, where he reflects on three generations of family history and his own future.Sign in to rate and Watchlist for personalized recommendationsSign inSuggest an edit or add missing contentBev what name was Hillbilly Elegy (2020) officially released in India in Hindi?AnswerYou have no recently viewed pagesBased on J. D. Vances's acclaimed memoir, Ron Howard's Hillbilly Elegy features powerful "reverse makeover" performances from Glenn Close and Amy Adams (that are sure to shine up nicely come awards season) but ultimately the film is a somewhat hollow, overly-glossy attempt to encapsulate J.D.'s struggles to escape a life of abuse and poverty. There are interesting, and important, themes at play in Hillbilly Elegy, about the difficulties of escaping cycles of violence and how destitution itself is a disease, but the narrative bubbles back and forth between J.D.'s past and present a bit too loosely, to the point where you start disengaging emotionally because were only getting the material in my head, not on the screen. The film is a somewhat hollow, overly-glossy attempt to encapsulate J.D.'s struggles to escape a life of abuse and poverty. 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