**The Princess Bride**

**Share this Review**

* Review Date: May 19, 2003
* Rated: PG
* Genre: [Fantasy](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/reviews/category/movie/genre/fantasy-4545)
* Release Year: 1987
* Running Time: 98 minutes

**Common Sense Media says**

Witty, winsome fairy tale for the whole family.

**What parents need to know**

Parents need to know that this quirky, funny fairy tale has quite a bit of action-style violence, including a torture machine, sword fights (one to the death), a death by poisoning, quicksand, fire pits, and ROUSes (rodents of unusual size) and giant shrieking eels that attack main characters. But the movie's skewed humor and its storybook feel lessen some of the impact of the violent scenes. There's also some drinking -- in one scene a drunken character is revived in a barrel of water -- and a bit of kissing.

**What's the story?**

The most beautiful woman in the world, Buttercup ([Robin Wright Penn](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/search/Robin%20Wright%20Penn)), gets engaged to the cruel Prince Humperdinck (Chris Sarandon) after she hears that her true love, Westley, was killed by the Dread Pirate Roberts. But before the wedding, she's kidnapped by a huge man with enormous strength (Andre the Giant), a master swordsman ([Mandy Patinkin](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/search/Mandy%20Patinkin)), and an evil genius (Wallace Shawn). A mysterious masked man ([Cary Elwes](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/search/Cary%20Elwes)) must defeat them all, and then escape with Buttercup through the treacherous Fire Swamp. When they're both captured by the prince and his six-fingered henchman, Count Rugen ([Christopher Guest](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/search/Christopher%20Guest)), they discover that not even death can get in the way of true love.

**Is it any good?**

THE PRINCESS BRIDE is stuffed full of every element of a classic romantic adventure -- princes, villains and evil geniuses, giants and giant creatures, sword fights, revenge, kidnapping, and a rescue on white horses -- and it coats them all in delicious humor.

This witty modern fairy tale by William Goldman (screenwriter of [*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/movie-reviews/Butch-Cassidy-Sundance-Kid.html) and [*All the President's Men*](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/movie-reviews/All-Presidents-Men.html)) is resoundingly satisfying. Goldman's book is even better -- and lots of fun to read aloud (though the book's asides are more for adult readers). The motley cast of storybook characters is consistently hilarious, right down to the bit parts featuring the likes of [Carol Kane](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/search/Carol%20Kane) and [Billy Crystal](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/search/Billy%20Crystal) as a bickering old witch and wizard, and Peter Cook as the Impressive Clergyman.

**Families can talk about...**

* Families can talk about what makes for a really good adventure/love story. Is it sword fights? Scary creatures? Handsome leading men and ladies?
* How does this movie poke fun at some of the standard fairy tale elements?
* In the end, why didn't the sick boy mind the kissing scene as much as he thought he would?

**Movie details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Theatrical release date: | September 25, 1987 |
| DVD release date: | September 4, 2001 |
| Cast: | [Cary Elwes](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/search/Cary%20Elwes), [Mandy Patinkin](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/search/Mandy%20Patinkin), [Robin Wright Penn](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/search/Robin%20Wright%20Penn) |
| Director: | [Rob Reiner](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/search/Rob%20Reiner) |
| Studio: | [MGM/UA](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/search?f%5b0%5d=field_reference_review_ent_prod%253Afield_term_movie_studios%3A5516) |
| Genre: | [Fantasy](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/reviews/category/movie/genre/fantasy-4545) |
| Topics: | [Magic and fantasy](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/reviews/category/movie/topic/magic-and-fantasy-21623), [Princesses and fairies](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/reviews/category/movie/topic/princesses-and-fairies-21630), [Adventures](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/reviews/category/movie/topic/adventures-21607), [Book characters](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/reviews/category/movie/topic/book-characters-21609), [Pirates](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/reviews/category/movie/topic/pirates-21629) |
| Run time: | 98 minutes |

Positive messages

Despite some manipulation and betrayal along the way, overall the movie's message is about the triumph of true love and the importance of loyalty, friendship, and family.

Positive role models

Characters prize true love and generally hold fast to their ideals where it's concerned. Some characters compromise their beliefs in the pursuit of their goals, but they don't win out in the end. Inigo is driven almost solely by a powerful quest for vengeance, but he has strong reasons. The grandfather and grandson have a touching relationship.

Violence & scariness

Action-style violence includes a torture machine, sword fights (one to the death), a death by poisoning, quicksand, fire pits, shrieking eels, and menacing ROUSes (rodents of unusual size).

Sexy stuff

A few kisses, most notably a very sweet storybook kiss. One reference to Buttercup's "perfect breasts."

Language

One use of "son of a bitch." Also "my God."

Drinking, drugs, & smoking

Inigo has a drinking problem (he's shown inebriated), and Fezzik nurses him back to health. Other characters sometimes drink from goblets of wine.

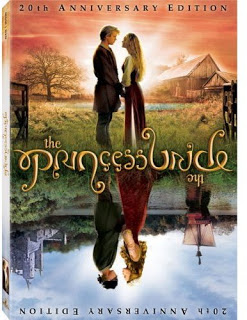
Educational value

The movie is intended to entertain rather than educate.

[Roger Ebert](http://www.rogerebert.com/contributors/roger-ebert)

October 9, 1987   |

"The Princess Bride" begins as a story that a grandfather is reading out of a book. But already the movie has a spin on it, because the grandfather is played by [Peter Falk](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/peter-falk), and in the distinctive quality of his voice we detect a certain edge. His voice seems to contain a measure of cynicism about fairy stories, a certain awareness that there are a lot more things on heaven and Earth than have been dreamed of by the Brothers Grimm.

The story he tells is about Buttercup, a beautiful princess ([Robin Wright](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/robin-wright)) who scornfully orders around a farm boy ([Cary Elwes](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/cary-elwes)) until the day when she realizes, thunderstruck, that she loves him. She wants to live happily ever after with him, but then evil forces intervene, and she is kidnapped and taken far away across the lost lands, while he is killed.

"Is this story going to have a lot of kissing in it?" Falk's grandson asks. Well, it's definitely going to have a lot of Screaming Eels.

The moment the princess is taken away by agents of the evil Prince Humperdinck ([Chris Sarandon](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/chris-sarandon)), "The Princess Bride" reveals itself as a sly parody of sword and sorcery movies, a film that somehow manages to exist on two levels at once: While younger viewers will sit spellbound at the thrilling events on the screen, adults, I think, will be laughing a lot. In its own peculiar way, "The Princess Bride" resembles "This Is Spinal Tap," an earlier film by the same director, [Rob Reiner](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/rob-reiner). Both films are funny not only because they contain comedy, but because Reiner does justice to the underlying form of his story. "Spinal Tap" looked and felt like a rock documentary - and then it was funny. "The Princess Bride" looks and feels like "[Legend](http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/legend-1986)" or any of those other quasi-heroic epic fantasies - and then it goes for the laughs.

Part of the secret is that Reiner never stays with the same laugh very long. There are a lot of people for his characters to meet as they make their long journey, and most of them are completely off the wall.

There is, for example, a band of three brigands led by [Wallace Shawn](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/wallace-shawn) as a scheming little conniver and including Andre the Giant as Fezzik the Giant, a crusher who may not necessarily have a heart of gold. It is Shawn who tosses the princess to the Screaming Eels, with great relish.

Another funny episode involves [Mandy Patinkin](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/mandy-patinkin) as Inigo Montoya, a heroic swordsman with a secret. And the funniest sequence in the film stars [Billy Crystal](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/billy-crystal) and [Carol Kane](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/carol-kane), both unrecogizable behind makeup, as an ancient wizard and crone who specialize in bringing the dead back to life. (I hope I'm not giving anything away; you didn't expect the princess's loved one to stay dead indefinitely, did you?)

"The Princess Bride" was adapted by [William Goldman](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/william-goldman) from his own novel, which he says was inspired by a book he read as a child, but which seems to have been cheerfully transformed by his wicked adult imagination. It is filled with good-hearted fun, with performances by actors who seem to be smacking their lips and by a certain true innocence that survives all of Reiner's satire. And, also, it does have kissing in it.

##### Cast

* [Cary Elwes](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/cary-elwes) as Westley
* [Mandy Patinkin](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/mandy-patinkin) as Inigo Montoya
* [Chris Sarandon](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/chris-sarandon) as Humperdinck
* [Christopher Guest](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/christopher-guest) as Count Rugen
* [Wallace Shawn](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/wallace-shawn) as Vizzini
* [Andre the Giant](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/andre-the-giant) as Fezzik
* [Fred Savage](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/fred-savage) as Grandson
* [Robin Wright](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/robin-wright) as Buttercup
* [Peter Falk](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/peter-falk) as Grandfather
* [Peter Cook](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/peter-cook) as Clergyman
* [Billy Crystal](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/billy-crystal) as Miracle Max

##### Directed by

* [Rob Reiner](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/rob-reiner)

##### Produced by

* [Andrew Scheinman](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/andrew-scheinman)
* [Reiner](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/reiner)

##### Written by

* [William Goldman](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/william-goldman)

##### Photographed by

* [Adrian Biddle](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/adrian-biddle)

##### Edited by

* [Robert Leighton](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/robert-leighton)

##### Music by

* [Mark Knopfler](http://www.rogerebert.com/cast-and-crew/mark-knopfler)

**Action, Comedy, Family, Fantasy, Romance**

**Rated PG**

**98 minutes**