

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret. (film)

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret. is a 2023 American coming-of-age comedy-drama film written and directed by Kelly Fremon Craig, based on the 1970 novel of the same name by Judy Blume.^[5] The film stars Abby Ryder Fortson as the title character, along with Rachel McAdams, Elle Graham, Benny Safdie, and Kathy Bates.

The film had its world premiere at the San Francisco International Film Festival on April 23, 2023, and was released theatrically in the United States on April 28, 2023, by Lionsgate. It received positive reviews and grossed \$21 million worldwide.

Plot

In 1970, eleven-year-old Margaret Simon is informed by her parents Barbara and Herb that the family is moving from New York City to a New Jersey suburb, as Herb has received a promotion. Margaret is upset about leaving her friends and her paternal grandmother, Sylvia, and begins to communicate with God about her concerns, anxieties, and hopes.

Upon moving to New Jersey, Margaret is quickly befriended by her neighbor and soon-to-be classmate Nancy Wheeler. Nancy welcomes Margaret into her friend group with two other girls, Gretchen Potter and Janie Loomis.

At the beginning of the school year, Margaret's teacher, Mr. Benedict, gives the class a year-long research assignment. When he wonders why Margaret dislikes religious holidays, she explains that since her mother is a Christian and her father is Jewish, her family does not observe the holidays and has left it up to Margaret to decide on her own religious identity as she grows older.

Prompted by her school assignment, Margaret asks her mother why she has never met her maternal grandparents. Barbara reveals she is estranged from her devoutly Christian parents Paul and Mary, who disowned Barbara when she married a Jew. On a weekend visit to NYC, Margaret asks Sylvia to take her to temple, which Sylvia gladly does. Meanwhile, Barbara attempts to fit in with the PTA and signs up for multiple committees, which draws her away from her love of painting and teaching art.

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>Kelly Fremon Craig</u>
Screenplay by	Kelly Fremon Craig
Based on	<i><u>Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.</u></i> by <u>Judy Blume</u>
Produced by	<u>James L. Brooks</u> Julie Ansell <u>Richard Sakai</u> Kelly Fremon Craig Judy Blume Amy Lorraine Brooks Aldric La'auli Porter

Margaret and her new friends anticipate the milestones of puberty, such as wearing a bra and having their first kisses. At classmate Norman Fischer's birthday party, Margaret enjoys her first kiss with Philip Leroy, a popular boy in her class, during a game of spin the bottle. Margaret also attends respective church services with Janie and Nancy.

After viewing a video about periods at school, the girls become excited about starting their periods. Margaret grows impatient when other girls get their periods before her, including Gretchen and Nancy.

One night while Margaret is in NYC with Nancy and her family, Nancy gets her period for the first time, and Margaret realizes she had fibbed about getting her period earlier.

At school, Margaret is assigned a group project with Laura Danker, a classmate ostracized by her peers (including Nancy) for being taller and more developed. While working together in the library, Margaret brings up rumors about Laura letting boys "feel her up", upsetting Laura and causing her to storm out. Following Laura to a Catholic church where she enters a confessional, Margaret admits her guilt over how she treated Laura.

For spring break, Margaret wants to join Sylvia on a trip to Florida, but these plans are interrupted when Paul and Mary reach out to Barbara and say they want to visit and meet Margaret. Upon learning of the cancellation, Sylvia decides to show up at the Simon house with a friend from Florida on the day of Paul and Mary's visit. After dinner, the evening becomes awkward when Paul and Mary question Margaret about possibly attending Sunday school. Sylvia retorts that Margaret has already chosen to become Jewish when they went to temple together, sparking an argument between the parents and grandparents over what religion Margaret should be. Margaret yells at the adults to stop fighting, proclaiming she does not care about religion and does not even believe in God.

Margaret hands in her research paper to Mr. Benedict, wherein she expresses her disillusionment with religion. Soon, she reconciles with her parents and Sylvia. At the end of the school year, Margaret thanks Mr. Benedict for being a good teacher. She also befriends Laura and asks her to dance, with Janie joining them shortly afterwards. Barbara, who has since returned to teaching painting, tells Nancy's mother Jan, the PTA president, that she will no longer volunteer for PTA committees.

Starring	<u>Rachel McAdams</u> <u>Abby Ryder Fortson</u> <u>Elle Graham</u> <u>Benny Safdie</u> <u>Kathy Bates</u>
Cinematography	<u>Tim Ives</u>
Edited by	<u>Nick Moore</u> <u>Oona Flaherty</u>
Music by	<u>Hans Zimmer</u>
Production company	<u>Gracie Films</u>
Distributed by	<u>Lionsgate</u>
Release dates	April 23, 2023 (SFIFF) April 28, 2023 (United States)
Running time	106 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$30 million ^[2]
Box office	\$21.5 million ^{[3][4]}

Before leaving for summer camp, Margaret talks to Moose Freed, a friend of Nancy's older brother. Moose is a neighborhood boy who mows her family's lawn and whom Margaret secretly has a crush on, and they agree to spend time together when she returns. At home, she discovers her first period has arrived and excitedly tells her mother, who is thrilled for her. Margaret then resumes her communication with God, thanking him.

Cast

- [Abby Ryder Fortson](#) as Margaret Simon
- [Rachel McAdams](#) as Barbara Simon
- [Kathy Bates](#) as Sylvia Simon
- [Benny Safdie](#) as Herb Simon
- [Elle Graham](#) as Nancy Wheeler
- Amari Alexis Price as Janie Loomis
- Katherine Kupferer as Gretchen Potter
- Kate MacCluggage as Mrs. Jan Wheeler
- Aidan Wojtak-Hissong as Moose Freed
- Landon S. Baxter as Evan Wheeler
- [Echo Kellum](#) as Mr. Benedict
- Zackary Brooks as Philip Leroy
- Isol Young as Laura Danker
- Simms May as Norman Fisher
- [Mia Dillon](#) as Mary Hutchins
- Gary Houston as Paul Hutchins

Production

After rejecting several offers to adapt her book in the 49 years since its publication, author [Judy Blume](#) sold the film rights to [James L. Brooks](#) and [Kelly Fremon Craig](#), who worked together on *The Edge of Seventeen* (2016), with Craig set to write and direct. A studio bidding war over the distribution rights was won by [Lionsgate](#).^{[6][7]}

In February 2021, it was announced that [Abby Ryder Fortson](#) would star as the titular Margaret, with [Rachel McAdams](#) cast as her mother.^[8] [Kathy Bates](#) was added to the cast in March.^[9] In April, [Benny Safdie](#) joined the cast.^[10]

Principal photography began on April 1, 2021, in [Charlotte, North Carolina](#).^[11] Filming also took place in [Concord, North Carolina](#) late in May,^[12] and wrapped in June 2021.^[13] [Hans Zimmer](#) composed the film's score.^[14]

Release

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret. had its world premiere at the [San Francisco International Film Festival](#) on April 23, 2023, and was released on April 28, 2023, by [Lionsgate Films](#).^[15] It was originally scheduled to be released on September 16, 2022.^[16]

The film was released on VOD on June 6, 2023, with a Blu-ray and DVD release that followed on July 11, 2023.^[17]

Reception

Box office

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret. grossed \$20.4 million in the United States and Canada, and \$1.1 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$21.5 million.^[4]

In the United States and Canada, *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.* was released alongside *Big George Foreman* and *Sisu*, and was projected to gross \$7–9 million from 3,334 theaters in its opening weekend. The film made \$2.3 million on its first day, including \$600,000 from early previews. It went on to debut to \$6.8 million, finishing third behind holdovers *The Super Mario Bros. Movie* and *Evil Dead Rise*.^[18] In its second weekend the film made \$3.2 million, finishing in fourth.^[19]

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 99% of 222 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 8.4/10. The website's consensus reads: "Effervescent and refreshingly frank about the travails of puberty, this long-awaited adaptation does full justice to Judy Blume's seminal novel."^[20] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 84 out of 100, based on 49 critics, indicating "universal acclaim".^[21] Audiences surveyed by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "A" on an A+ to F scale, while those polled by PostTrak gave it an 88% positive score (with an average 4.5 out of 5 stars).^[18]

Critics praised the film for being a faithful adaptation of the book while also fleshing out its adult characters. Pete Hammond of *Deadline Hollywood* described the film as a "rip-roaring, funny, human, wonderful studio movie comedy you might have forgotten Hollywood knew how to make anymore", and praised the film's cast, Craig's direction, and the decision to leave the story set in the 1970s, as the original novel did.^[22] Hammond pointed out how "every character in this film is finding there is much to learn in life at whatever point you happen to be."^[22] *Time* called Fortson "marvelous" and said she "[captures] all of Margaret's eager earnestness".^[23] Writing for *Jezebel*, Rodlyn-mae Banting said the "film adaptation comes as a gift—one that fiercely advocates for the beauty of girlhood in all of its agonizing, terrifying, but

absolutely exhilarating glory."^[24] Amy Nicholson of *Variety* said "There's plenty in [the film] to treasure" and "the [girls'] friendship scenes are standouts", but opined the film also "seems uneasy putting funny, flawed and all-too-realistic Margaret on screen exactly as she is."^[25]

Accolades

Award / Film Festival	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
<u>Heartland Film Festival</u>	2023	Truly Moving Picture Award	<i>Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.</i>	Won	^[26]
<u>Hollywood Critics Association Midseason Film Awards</u>	June 30, 2023	Best Picture	<i>Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.</i>	Nominated	^[27]
		Best Director	<u>Kelly Fremon Craig</u>	Nominated	
		Best Screenplay		Nominated	
		Best Actress	<u>Abby Ryder Fortson</u>	Runner-up	
		Best Supporting Actress	<u>Rachel McAdams</u>	Runner-up	
			<u>Kathy Bates</u>	Nominated	
<u>Gotham Independent Film Awards</u>	November 27, 2023	Outstanding Supporting Performance	Rachel McAdams	Nominated	^[28]
<u>Chicago Film Critics Association Awards</u>	December 12, 2023	Best Supporting Actress	Rachel McAdams	Nominated	^[29]
		Best Adapted Screenplay	Kelly Fremon Craig	Nominated	
		Most Promising Performer	Abby Ryder Fortson	Nominated	
<u>Washington D.C. Area Film Critics Association Awards</u>	December 10, 2023	Best Youth Performance	Abby Ryder Fortson	Nominated	^[30]
<u>Los Angeles Film Critics Association</u>	December 10, 2023	Best Supporting Performance	Rachel McAdams	Won	^[31]
<u>Boston Society of Film Critics</u>	December 10, 2023	Best Adapted Screenplay	Kelly Fremon Craig	Runner-up ^[a]	^[32]
<u>Las Vegas Film Critics Society</u>	December 13, 2023	Best Supporting Actress	Rachel McAdams	Nominated	^[33]
		Best Adapted Screenplay	Kelly Fremon Craig	Nominated	
		Best Family Film	<i>Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.</i>	Won	
		Youth in Film (Female)	Abby Ryder Fortson	Won	
			Elle Graham	Nominated	
<u>Indiana Film Journalists Association</u>	December 17, 2023	Best Film	<i>Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.</i>	Nominated	^[34]
		Best Supporting Performance	Rachel McAdams	Nominated	^[35]

		Best Adapted Screenplay	Kelly Fremon Craig	Nominated	
		Best Ensemble Acting	<i>Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.</i>	Nominated	
<u>St. Louis Film Critics Association</u>	<u>December 17, 2023</u>	Best Supporting Actress	Rachel McAdams	Runner-up	[36]
		Best Adapted Screenplay	Kelly Fremon Craig	Nominated	
		Best Comedy	<i>Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.</i>	Nominated	
<u>Phoenix Film Critics Society</u>	December 18, 2023	Best Performance by a Youth	Abby Ryder-Fortson	Won	[37]
<u>North Texas Film Critics Association</u>	December 18, 2023	Best Newcomer		Nominated	[38]
		Best Supporting Actress	Rachel McAdams	Nominated	
<u>Florida Film Critics Circle Awards</u>	<u>December 21, 2023</u>	<u>Best Supporting Actress</u>	Rachel McAdams	Won	[39][40]
		<u>Best Adapted Screenplay</u>	Kelly Fremon Craig	Nominated	
<u>San Diego Film Critics Society</u>	<u>December 19, 2023</u>	<u>Best Picture</u>	<i>Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.</i>	Won	[41][42]
		<u>Best Director</u>	Kelly Fremon Craig	Nominated	
		<u>Best Actress</u>	Abby Ryder Fortson	Nominated	
		<u>Best Supporting Actress</u>	Rachel McAdams	Won	
		<u>Best Adapted Screenplay</u>	Kelly Fremon Craig	Won	
		Best Use of Music	<i>Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.</i>	Nominated	
		Best Comedic Performance	Abby Ryder Fortson	Nominated	
		Best Youth Performance (For a performer under the age of 18)		Won	
		Breakthrough Actor		Won	
<u>Women Film Critics Circle</u>	December 18, 2023	Best Woman Storyteller	Kelly Fremon Craig	Runner-up	[43]
<u>Alliance of Women Film Journalists</u>	January 3, 2024	Best Woman's Breakthrough Performance	Abby Ryder Forston	Nominated	[44]
<u>Georgia Film Critics Association</u>	January 5, 2024	Best Supporting Actress	Rachel McAdams	Nominated	[45][46]
		Best Adapted Screenplay	Kelly Fremon Craig	Nominated	
		Breakthrough Award	Abby Ryder Forston	Nominated	

<u>Astra Film and Creative Awards</u>	<u>January 6, 2024</u>	Best Adapted Screenplay	Kelly Fremon Craig	Nominated	[47]
		Best Comedy Feature	<i>Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.</i>	Won	
		Best Supporting Actress	Rachel McAdams	Nominated	
		Star on the Rise Award	Abby Ryder Fortson	Won	
<u>Seattle Film Critics Society</u>	<u>January 8, 2024</u>	Best Supporting Actress	Rachel McAdams	Nominated	[48]
		Best Youth Performance	Abby Ryder Forston	Nominated	
<u>San Francisco Bay Area Film Critics Circle</u>	<u>January 9, 2024</u>	<u>Best Supporting Actress</u>	Rachel McAdams	Nominated	[49]
<u>Austin Film Critics Association</u>	<u>January 10, 2024</u>	Best Supporting Actress	Rachel McAdams	Nominated	[50]
		<u>Best Adapted Screenplay</u>	Kelly Fremon Craig	Nominated	
		The Robert R. "Bobby" McCurdy Memorial Breakthrough Artist Award	Abby Ryder Forston	Nominated	
<u>Denver Film Critics Society</u>	12 January 2024	Best Supporting Performance by an Actor, Female	Rachel McAdams	Nominated	[51]
<u>Critics' Choice Awards</u>	<u>January 14, 2024</u>	<u>Best Adapted Screenplay</u>	Kelly Fremon Craig	Nominated	[52]
		<u>Best Young Actor/Actress</u>	Abby Ryder Fortson	Nominated	
<u>Houston Film Critics Society</u>	<u>January 22, 2024</u>	<u>Best Picture</u>	<i>Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.</i>	Nominated	[53] [54]
		<u>Best Supporting Actress</u>	Rachel McAdams	Nominated	
<u>Kansas City Film Critics Circle</u>	<u>January 27, 2024</u>	Best Supporting Actress	Rachel McAdams	Runner-up	[55]
		<u>Best Adapted Screenplay</u>	Kelly Fremon Craig	Won	
<u>Minnesota Film Critics Alliance</u>	February 04, 2024	Best Supporting Actress	Rachel McAdams	Runner-up	[56]
<u>Set Decorators Society of America Awards</u>	<u>February 13, 2024</u>	<u>Best Achievement in Décor/Design of a Comedy or Musical Feature Film</u>	Selina M. Van den Brink and Steve Saklad	Nominated	[57]
<u>People's Choice Awards</u>	<u>February 18, 2024</u>	The Comedy Movie of the Year	<i>Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.</i>	Nominated	[58]
<u>Dorian Awards</u>	February 26, 2024	Best Supporting Film Performance of the Year	Rachel McAdams	Nominated	[59]
		Unsung Film of the	<i>Are You There God? It's</i>	Won	

		Year	<i>Me, Margaret.</i>		
Artios Awards	March 7, 2024	Outstanding Achievement in Casting – Big Budget Feature (Comedy)	Francine Maisler, Melissa Kostenbauder, Betsy Fippinger, Tara Feldstein, Chase Paris, Molly Rose	Won	[60]
Writers Guild of America Awards	April 14, 2024	Best Adapted Screenplay	Kelly Fremon Craig	Nominated	[61]

Notes

- a. Shared with Eric Roth and Martin Scorsese for *Killers of the Flower Moon*.

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External links

- Official website (<https://www.itsmemargaret.movie>)
- Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9185206/>) at IMDb

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