

= Bridge to Terabithia (2007 film) =

Bridge to Terabithia is a 2007 American fantasy adventure drama film directed by Gábor Csupó and adapted for film by David L. Paterson and Jeff Stockwell . The film is based on the Katherine Paterson novel of the same name , and released by Walt Disney Pictures . The film stars Josh Hutcherson , AnnaSophia Robb , Robert Patrick , Bailee Madison and Zooey Deschanel . Bridge to Terabithia tells the story of Jesse Aarons and Leslie Burke , 12 @-@ year @-@ old neighbors who create a fantasy world called Terabithia and spend their free time together in an abandoned tree house .

The original novel was based on events from the childhood of the author 's son , screenwriter David Paterson . When he asked his mother if he could write a screenplay of the novel , she agreed in part because of his ability as a playwright . Production began in February 2006 , and the film was finished by November . Principal photography was shot in Auckland , New Zealand within sixty days . Film editing took ten weeks , while post @-@ production , music mixing , and visual effects took several months .

Bridge to Terabithia was released to positive reviews ; critics called it a faithful adaptation of the children 's novel , and found dynamic visuals and natural performances further enhanced the imaginative film . Bridge to Terabithia was nominated for seven awards , winning five at the Young Artist Awards .

= = Plot = =

Jesse " Jess " Aarons (Josh Hutcherson) is a 12 @-@ year @-@ old aspiring artist living with his financially struggling family in Lark Creek . He rides the bus to school with his little sister May Belle (Bailee Madison) , where he avoids the school bully Janice Avery (Lauren Clinton) . In class , Jess is teased by classmates Scott Hoager (Cameron Wakefield) and Gary Fulcher (Elliot Lawless) , and meets new student Leslie Burke (AnnaSophia Robb) . At recess , Jess enters a running event , for which he had been training at home . Leslie also enters and manages to beat all the boys , much to Jess ' irritation . On the way home , Jess and Leslie learn that they are next @-@ door neighbors .

Later in the evening , Jess becomes frustrated when he finds that May has drawn in his notebook , but his strict yet caring father (Robert Patrick) sides with her . He later watches them gardening together , disappointed that his father does not spend time with him . Moreover , his mother cherishes her daughters than himself . The next day at school , Leslie compliments Jess ' drawing ability , and they soon become friends . After school , they venture into the woods and swing across a creek on a rope . Jess and Leslie find an abandoned tree house on the other side , and invent a new world , which they call Terabithia . The fantasy world , which is a reflection on their lives , comes to life through their eyes as they explore the surroundings . For the next few days , Jess and Leslie spend their free time in the tree house getting to know each other .

Leslie gives Jess an art kit on his birthday , much to his delight . Jess becomes his father 's attitude , and refuses the existence of Terabithia the next day at school . Afterwards , Jess apologizes to Leslie by giving her a puppy , whom she names Prince Terrien . Once in Terabithia , they fight with various creatures , including a troll resembling Janice . At school , Leslie becomes frustrated by Janice 's fee for using the toilet . Jess and Leslie play a prank on Janice , and she becomes the laughing stock of everyone on the bus . Once Leslie 's parents finish their book , she and Jess help paint their house . Jess is impressed by her parents ' happiness , and smiles as he watches their family . At school , Leslie discovers an upset Janice that her bullying is due to her abusive father , and they become friends and later Janice becomes Jess ' friend . Jess and Leslie take P.T. to Terabithia , where they fight off several creatures resembling students at their school . They decide to go home , and Jess smiles as Leslie runs away .

The next morning , Ms. Edmunds (Zooey Deschanel) , Jess ' music teacher , calls to invite him on a one @-@ on @-@ one field trip to an art museum . Jess tries to ask his mother 's permission ; however , she is half @-@ asleep and he takes her mumbling as approval . Jess doesn 't ask Leslie

to accompany him , and merely looks at her house as they drive by . When he returns home , Jess finds that his father and mother were worried sick since they didn 't know where he was . His father reveals to Jesse that Leslie had died that morning while trying to swing across the rain @-@ swollen creek .

The following day , Jesse and his parents visit the Burke family home to pay their respects . Leslie 's father , Bill Burke (Latham Gaines) , tells Jess that she loved him , and thanks him for being a very good friend to her , since she had trouble making friends at her old school . Jess feels overwhelming guilt for Leslie 's death , but his father actually consoles him to keep their friendship alive for her sake .

Jess decides to re @-@ imagine Terabithia and builds a bridge across the river to welcome a new ruler . He invites May Belle to Terabithia ; she is delighted because she was previously denied any opportunity to enter . She and Jess bring back Terabithia in even greater splendor , with Jess as king and his sister as princess .

= = Cast = =

Josh Hutcherson as Jess Aarons
AnnaSophia Robb as Leslie Burke
Bailee Madison as May Belle Aarons
Robert Patrick as Jack Aarons
Kate Butler as Nancy Aarons
Lauren Clinton as Janice Avery
Cameron Wakefield as Scott Hoager
Elliot Lawless as Gary Fulcher
Isabelle Kircher as Carla
Carly Owen as Madison
Latham Gaines as Bill Burke
Judy McIntosh as Judy Burke
Zooey Deschanel as Ms. Edmunds
Patricia Aldersley as Grandma Burke (on Leslie 's funeral)
Jen Wolfe as Mrs. Myers
James Gaylayn as Principal Turner
Ian Harcourt as Kenny (bus driver)
Devon Wood as Brenda Aarons
Emma Fenton as Ellie Aarons
Grace Brannigan as Joyce Aarons
Random dog as Troll hunter

= = Production = =

= = = Overview = = =

Production for the film began in February 2006 , with a budget of \$ 20 ? 25 million . Principal photography for the film was shot in Auckland , New Zealand within sixty days . Film editing took ten weeks , while post @-@ production , music mixing , and visual effects took a few months . The film was finished by November 2006 , because the crew " had to rush " to meet the February 16 deadline . The film was directed by Nickelodeon 's Rugrats co @-@ creator and former Hanna @-@ Barbera animator Gábor Csupó , who was first recommended for the job by Walden Media President Cary Granat . Although Csupó had never worked on a live @-@ action film before , it " didn 't worry Granat in the least " . Csupó stated that he was interested in making the film because he " had the ambition to do a live @-@ action film for a long time " , but that he " didn 't like anything until I read this book " . He described the book as " beautiful " and said that it " moved [him] " .

Bridge to Terabithia was cinematographer Michael Chapman 's final film before his retirement . Chapman mentioned in the film 's DVD commentary that he retired after shooting this film because he wanted his last film to be a good one ; " this is such a beautiful story , and it 's exactly the kind of movie I want to do at this time in my life " .

= = = Casting = = =

Director Csupó stated that they had no actors initially in mind for the film . The first actor cast was AnnaSophia Robb as Leslie Burke . Robb wrote Csupó " such a beautiful , heartwarming letter " that expressed her love for the book and the character . Csupó said that he cast her because of " her letter , her enthusiasm , and her love of the material " . Robb also conversed with producer Lauren Levine before casting even began , and " their conversation convinced her that , without a doubt , AnnaSophia was meant for this role " . Levine said that " it was just so clear in talking to her about all this fantasy that I was basically talking to Leslie , that she had that same kind of spark and magical presence . She might be physically different from Leslie in the book , but the spirit of Leslie and the spirit of AnnaSophia are nearly identical . It was a match made in heaven . " With regard to the character , Robb said " [Leslie] ' s one of those people who 's just always lit up , who has this glow about her , and no one can bring her down . Leslie 's such a lively and energetic character , it was really fun for me to become her . "

Levine stated that " looking for Jesse was a really tough hunt . We needed someone who could go from an introverted boy in an isolated world to someone who completely taps into his imagination and becomes a confident , brave leader in Terabithia . That 's a heck of a range for such a young actor . " Josh Hutcherson was not their first choice for the role of Jesse Aarons , but they settled with him because they " felt the chemistry between AnnaSophia Robb and him " . Hutcherson said that the project appealed to him because of " the real life day @-@ to @-@ day drama as well as the arc of the character Jesse " .

The filmmakers cast Robert Patrick as Jess 's hardworking and strict father based on his previous roles in the films Walk the Line , Flags of Our Fathers , and the television series The Unit . Patrick explained that he related to the story because he was " constantly creating imaginary worlds as a kid " himself , and that the film 's setting reminded him of where he grew up . He also said that he took on the role because he wanted to star in a film that his children could watch .

Csupó said that they cast Bailee Madison as May Belle Aarons after weeks of searching for an actress to play the part . He went on to say that " she had such a charm , even before the camera , she was just like a little sweetheart . She was very confident , she showed up , shook hands with everybody , totally sweet and perky . I said ' WOW ! ' ? she was just stealing everybody 's heart on the spot . "

= = = Design and effects = = =

Csupó explained that " it was a very conscious decision from the very beginning that we 're not going to overdo the visual effects because of the story 's integrity and the book 's integrity " , because there was only a brief mention of Jess and Leslie fighting imaginary creatures in the forest in the novel . With that in mind , they " tried to do the absolute minimum , which would be required to put it into a movie version " .

In designing the fantasy creatures found in Terabithia , Csupó wanted to make creatures that were " little more artsy , imaginative , fantastical creatures than the typical rendered characters you see in other movies " , and drew inspiration from Terry Gilliam and Ridley Scott . Dima Malanichev came up with the drawings for the creatures with Csupó 's guidance . Csupó chose to have Weta Digital render the 3D animation because he " was impressed with their artistic integrity , the teamwork , the [fact that] people were really nice , and also they responded to our designs very positively " . Weta modified some of the creature designs , but ultimately remained faithful to Csupó 's original designs .

There were around 100 crew members from Weta working on the effects for the film . Weta was

already working on animating the creatures while the film was being shot , and Weta crew members were on @-@ set for all the scenes that involved special effects during the filming . Weta visual effects supervisor Matt Aitken explained that process involved in interpreting the creatures was " split into two steps " . First , natural @-@ looking creatures were created based on pencil sketches by Csupó and Malanichev , and this was done mostly through Photoshop collages done by visual effects art director Michael Pangrazio . The second step was to figure out animation or motion styles that best suited these creatures .

Leslie 's costumes in the film were designed to look as if the character " might have made some of them herself " , and they were updated from those described in the book to reflect what would currently be considered eccentric .

= = = Writing = = =

Producer and screenwriter David L. Paterson is the novel 's author 's son , and his name was featured on its dedication page . The story was based on his real life best friend , Lisa Hill , who was struck by lightning and killed when they were both eight years old . Paterson had asked his mother , Katherine Paterson , if he could write a screenplay of the novel , and she agreed " not only because he 's [her] son , but also because he 's a very good playwright " . Paterson had difficulty marketing the screenplay , mostly because of Leslie 's death ; " if you can believe this , I did meet with some companies that asked if I could just ' hurt ' Leslie a little bit ? put her in a light coma and then bring her out " .

The most important thing for Paterson was to keep the spirit of the book alive while finding a way to transform it from " a novel that takes place mostly in the characters ' heads to a dynamic visual medium " . Paterson knew that the film had to be about friendship and imagination . While Paterson focused on " bringing out the emotions of the story , " he admitted to having difficulty writing about Terabithia " because it was too close " . He credited fellow screenwriter Jeff Stockwell for recreating Terabithia for the film . " What Jeff was able to do as an outsider who wasn 't so attached to the story was to really let his imagination go free and make up this world in a wonderful way " , David said . Csupó noted that the two main characters are a little bit older in the film than they are in the book . Csupó reasons that the movie " deals with so many issues including friendship , and maybe first innocent love , things like that " , so it " made more sense " to make the characters older .

= = Soundtrack = =

The film features a musical score by Aaron Zigman , who was hired after Alison Krauss backed out of the job . Zigman mentioned that there are similarities between the music he composed for Bridge to Terabithia and the film Flicka in that " ... at times there 's a bit of a Celtic influence but not much " , but he also went on to say that there was a more modern feel to the music he composed for Bridge to Terabithia . He did so as Csupó requested him to do not compose " your typical Hollywood Score " ; he then mixed up orchestral melody with " a bit of a modern flavor . " The score he composed for the film is described as " very large " compared to his other work , and Zigman commented that " Aside from the minimalist stuff and coloring that I love to do , I also like big orchestral stuff , and want to do more of that , and this film enabled me to spread my wings out a bit . " The official soundtrack for the film was released as Music from and Inspired by Bridge to Terabithia by Hollywood Records on February 13 , 2007 .

= = Release = =

= = = Marketing and promotion = = =

The promotion and advertising for the film was met with criticism and controversy . The filmmakers distanced themselves away from the advertising campaign for the film , saying that it was

deliberately misleading and made the film seem to be about , or occurring in , a fantasy world . David Paterson was surprised by the trailer , but understood the marketing reasoning behind it , saying :

Critics commented on the film 's misleading advertisement campaign . One critic said the film was actually " grounded in reality far more than in fantasy " , while another thought , " far from a computer generated escapist fantasy , this film is an unpretentious and touching tale of preteen companionship and loss " .

= = = Distribution = = =

The film premiered at the El Capitan Theatre in Hollywood on February 16 , 2007 . Paterson , an alumnus of The Catholic University of America , held a special advance screening of the film for members of the CUA community at the AFI Silver Theatre in Silver Spring , Maryland on February 1 , 2007 . The film opened in the United Kingdom on May 4 , 2007 , and in New Zealand June 7 , 2007 . The film had a strong second place domestic opening over the Presidents ' Day weekend , grossing " a higher @-@ than @-@ expected " \$ 28 @,@ 536 @,@ 717 from 2 @,@ 284 screens , earning an average of \$ 9 @,@ 885 per screen . The opening Friday box office was \$ 6 @.@ 3 million . The film has a worldwide gross of US \$ 137 million , taking in \$ 82 million in the US and Canada alone .

The film was produced by Walden Media . Buena Vista Distribution had released the film in North America and Australia through Walt Disney Pictures , while Summit Entertainment handled distribution in other territories , except for Latin America , where the film was released by Paramount Pictures , and the United Kingdom , where release was handled by Icon Film Distribution .

The DVD and Blu @-@ ray Disc were released on June 19 , 2007 in the US . The DVD and high definition Blu @-@ ray version shared the same special features ; including : " Digital Imagination : Bringing Terabithia to Life " , " Behind the Book : The Themes of Bridge to Terabithia " , " Keep Your Mind Wide Open " music video by Robb , and two audio commentaries , the first with director Gabor Csupo , writer Jeff Stockwell , and producer Hal Lieberman , and the second with producer Lauren Levine and actors Hutcherson and Robb .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical reception = = =

Bridge to Terabithia received positive reviews from film critics . Review aggregation website Rotten Tomatoes gives the film a score of 85 % based on 157 reviews , with an average score of 7 @.@ 2 / 10 . The site 's consensus is , that the film is " a faithful adaptation of a beloved children 's novel and a powerful portrayal of love , loss , and imagination through children 's eyes . Dynamic visuals and natural performances further enhance the imaginative film " . At Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , the film received an average score of 74 % based on 25 reviews , indicating " generally favorable reviews " .

James Berardinelli of ReelViews called Bridge to Terabithia " easily the best family feature of the early year " . Ann Hornaday of The Washington Post praised the script for being " utterly recognizable and authentic " , and thought Robb and Hutcherson were " perfectly cast " . Hornaday wrote that although the final five minutes succumbed to " oversweet sentiment " , viewers would remember the film 's " warmth and respect with which it pays homage to first love " . Jessica Grose of The Village Voice commended director Csupó for omitting " cutesy tween stereotypes " , and felt Jess 's relationship with his father elevated Bridge to Terabithia from " a good kids movie to a classic contender " . The New York Times critic Jeannette Catsoulis believed that the fantasy was kept in the background " to find magic in the everyday " , and thought Csupó directed " like someone intimate with the pain of being different , allowing each personality more than a single characteristic " . The reviewer praised all the leads for their strong performances , especially Deschanel and

Madison . Catsoulis found the film was able to handle adult topics " with nuance and sensitivity " , and being consistently smart and " delicate as a spider web " , it was the kind of children 's movie " rarely seen nowadays " . Miriam di Nunzio of the Chicago Sun @-@ Times praised Hutcherson and Robb 's performances , saying that " the film 's heart and soul rests on the abilities of its young lead characters to make us really see the world through children 's eyes . The dynamic duo of Hutcherson and Robb do not disappoint . "

Despite the critical acclaim , not all reviews were as positive . Claudia Puig of USA Today wrote that " for a movie about the power of imagination , Bridge to Terabithia is not as clever as you would hope " . Puig called the film a " serviceable translation " of the novel , but thought the adult characters were caricatured . The reviewer found the real @-@ life portions of the movie were " derivative and simplistic " , but found Jess 's emotional tumult felt " powerfully authentic , and this is where the film finds its truth and soul " . The Wall Street Journal critic Joe Morgenstern felt that despite the occasional misuse of enchantment ? " brief spasms of overproduced fantasy " ? the novel 's screen adaptation was told with " agreeable simplicity in between computer @-@ generated monsters " . Morgenstern was disappointed with the performances by the young members of the cast , which he described as " appealing but unpolished " . Morgenstern thought Csupó lacked experience directing actors , and that although Deschanel was the best adult performer , she seemed self @-@ directed . Entertainment Weekly 's Gregory Kirschling was confused by the main characters ' lack of excitement towards Terabithia , and felt the film could not decide if it was " a fantasy or a coming @-@ of @-@ age story " .

= = = Awards and nominations = = =

Bridge to Terabithia was nominated for seven awards , of which it won five . Josh Hutcherson was nominated at the 2008 Saturn Awards for " Best Performance by a Younger Actor " . AnnaSophia Robb was nominated for a Broadcast Film Critics Association Award for " Best Young Actress " . The film won five awards at the Young Artist Awards , including " Best Family Feature Film (Fantasy or Musical) " . Hutcherson won " Best Performance in a Feature Film ? Leading Young Actor " , Robb won " Best Performance in a Feature Film ? Leading Young Actress " , and Bailee Madison won " Best Performance in a Feature Film ? Young Actress Age Ten or Younger " . The cast won the award for " Best Performance in a Feature Film ? Young Ensemble Cast " , which included Hutcherson , Robb , Madison , Wakefield , Clinton , Lawless , Isabelle Rose Kircher , Carly Owen , Devon Wood , Emma Fenton and Grace Brannigan .