

THE WATSONS GO TO BIRMINGHAM - 1963: MOVIE VERSION

Study Guide compares the novel *The Watsons go to Birmingham - 1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis to the movie *The Watsons Go to Birmingham (2013)* starring Anika Noni Rose, David Alan Grier, Bryce Clyde Jenkins, Harrison Knight, Skai Jackson and Wood Harris.
Directed by Kenny Leon. Arc-Entertainment.



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SAMPLE THE WATSONS GO TO BIRMINGHAM - 1963: MOVIE VERSION

THE MOVIE VERSION OF *THE WATSONS GO TO BIRMINGHAM* - 1963 IS NOT LIKE THE BOOK by Christopher Paul Curtis

RECOMMENDED MOVIE: *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* (2013) starring Anika Noni Rose, David Alan Grier, Bryce Clyde Jenkins, Harrison Knight, Skai Jackson and Wood Harris. Directed by Kenny Leon. Arc-Entertainment. This Hallmark Channel film is the only movie of the book. The film leaves out several subplots in the book, but the main plot is accurate. Most of the book takes place in Detroit. The movie focuses on a few chapters set in Birmingham. The biggest difference is the tone. The book is delightfully funny and witty. The movie is not.

HOW ACCURATE IS THE MOVIE VERSION OF THE BOOK?

Plot: ★★☆☆☆ Characters: ★★☆☆☆ Setting: ★★★★★

Structure: ★★★★★ Theme: ★★☆☆☆

WHAT'S IN THE BOOK THAT'S NOT IN THE MOVIE?

Rufus, Cody, L.J. Jones, plastic dinosaurs, Kenny's shared lunches with Rufus and Cody, Maytag washes, fake garbage trucks, stolen gloves, Byron's punishment of Larry Dunn, Mr. Mitchell, Swedish Crème cookies, the dead bird, *Yakety Yak*, the angel at Collier's Landing, Mr. Robert saves Toddy from drowning.

WHAT'S IN THE MOVIE THAT'S NOT IN THE BOOK?

Cousins Sarah and James, Jr, the lunch counter incident, trip to the movies, Byron's interest in the Civil Rights Movement, Medgar Evers' speech on the radio, church scenes, Joetta's singing in the choir, the teacher who turns her back, the marches in Birmingham, TV and radio coverage of civil rights demonstrations.

WHAT'S THE SAME?

Bullies target Kenny, Rufus and Cody, Buphead's bad influence on Byron, winters in Flint, Michigan, Mr. Alum, Lipless Wonder, Ultra-Glide, Brown Bomber, trip to Birmingham, the outhouse, Grandma Sands, Mr. Robert, angel doll, whirlpool (Wool Pooh) at Collier's Landing, Byron saves Kenny's life, church bombing, Kenny's time behind the couch, Byron helps Kenny recover.

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THE MOVIE: SUMMARY

The following is a scene-by-scene comparison of the movie to the corresponding chapters in the book.

THE MOVIE: CHAPTER 1 *And You Wonder Why We Get Called the Weird Watsons*

OPENING SCENE: The narrator is 12-year-old Kenny Watson. (**ERROR:** In the book Kenny is 10 years old). Kenny remembers that his family lived in Flint, Michigan and that his 13-year-old brother Byron was always getting into trouble. (**ACCURATE**) Kenny describes a cold morning in Flint, Michigan in 1963. (**ACCURATE**) The Watson family is watching TV in their cold living room. (**ACCURATE**) On the couch sit Mrs. Watson (Wilona), Mr. Watson (Daniel), 6-year-old Joetta, and Kenny. (**ACCURATE**) Byron sits in an armchair. (**ACCURATE**) The TV weatherman reports that it is warm in Atlanta. (**ACCURATE**) Mrs. Watson says that Atlanta is near her home town of Birmingham, Alabama. (**ACCURATE**)

Mr. Watson tells the story of how his wife almost married another man named Hank Henderson whom Mr. Watson calls Hambone Henderson. (**ACCURATE**) Henderson had knots on his head which was shaped like a ham bone. (**ACCURATE**) Henderson told Wilona Watson that if she married Mr. Watson, she would have to live in Flint, Michigan in an igloo like *Nanook of the North*. (**ACCURATE**)

Mrs. Watson protests that Birmingham is a good place to live where people are friendly and the pace is slower. (**ACCURATE**) Mr. Watson reminds her of Colored Only bathrooms. (**ACCURATE**) Mrs. Watson looks at Byron and adds that in Birmingham children respect their parents. (**ACCURATE**)

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