***The Road***

Auteur: Cormac McCarthy

Titel: The Road

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The protagonists their names are not named a single time, throughout either the movie or the book. They are simply named “The father’’ and “the boy”

Setting: America, post-apocalyptic.

*Summary*

*The Road* opens after some unknown apocalyptic event has struck. A man and his son are travelling through America, trying to survive. The first section of the book is slow-paced and really only explains to the reader that there are mostly “bad” people inhabiting the earth. Furthermore it describes earth the way it looks: in ashes and isolation.

That changes about a quarter of the way into the book. A group of "bad guys" (basically, people out on the road who steal, rape and eat other people) wake up the man and the boy, who then quickly hide away – but one of the unknown group members wanders off from the group, into the man and the boy. The man shoots the unknown person out of self-defense and escapes together with the boy.

Another really frightening event happens soon after. The Boy and The Man have run out of food and need to find some supplies. They find a house that looks to be occupied. They end up seeing something horrifying in the house: a basement full of human captives being held as livestock. Whoever is living in this house is eating these people. The Man and The Boy quickly attempt to get out of there, but almost get caught by the gang that lives in the house.
But: not only bad things happen, after escaping the house, they later find an apple garden and a well, which keep them fed and watered for a little bit.

As seems to always happen, though, their food stores run out soon enough and they find themselves hungry once again. This leads to their major discovery: a bomb shelter full of canned goods and supplies. They spend a couple days here eating to their hearts' content. But because of noises above the shelter, they don’t feel safe anymore and thus must leave.

They come upon numerous burned bodies and other horrifying things. They notice a group of people following them: three men and a pregnant woman. The man and boy hide and let the group pass. Later, the man and boy come upon their camp and discover the just born baby skewered over a fire. The boy is so shocked, that he doesn't speak for over a day.

All along, our protagonists have been traveling south and east. The Man thinks if they can just reach the coast, they'll be all right. It's no small feat, as they have to cross mountains and other rough terrain. When they do get to the coast, it's a big disappointment. However, The Man spies a wrecked ship a few hundred yards out. It's full of food and useful stuff, like a flare gun and batteries. They eat well for a while.

But then their luck turns bad again. The Boy gets sick. The Man is beside himself trying to keep The Boy alive. He finally recovers, but then more bad stuff happens. Someone tries to run off with their supplies. They have to chase the thief down and when they do, they get their food back, but it's a big scare, and The Boy isn't happy with how The Man treats the thief (The man told the thief to give the man all of his clothes, as a punishment for stealing from them.)

They head farther south through a coastal city, and more bad luck strikes. Someone shoots an arrow from a window and hits The Man in the leg. It's a nasty wound.

They travel inland. Finally, in a pine forest, The Man can't go any farther. He lays down and slowly dies, probably because of the arrow wound, but he dies with The Boy beside him. Much of the book has been leading up to this event, and The Man's interactions with The Boy can be seen as an attempt to prepare The Boy to live in the world on his own.

Almost immediately, though, another family appears on the road, and they take The Boy in. The novel ends on a note of hope: perhaps this small family can survive and eventually rebuild a tolerable world.

*Important Text fragments*

*"What is it?” the man said.*

*“Nothing.”*

*“We'll find something to eat. We always do. “*

*The boy didn’t answer.*

*The man watched him.*

*“That's not it, is it? It's okay. Tell me.”*

*The boy looked away down the road.*

*“I want you to tell me. It's okay.”*

*He shook his head.*

*Look at me, the man said.*

*He turned and looked. He looked like he'd been crying.*

*“Just tell me. “*

*“We wouldn't ever eat anybody, would we?”*

*“No. Of course not.”*

*“Even if we were starving?”*

*“We're starving now.”*

*“You said we weren't.”*

*“I said we weren't dying. I didn't say we weren't starving.”*

*“But we wouldn't.”*

*“No. We wouldn't.”*

*“No matter what.”*

*“No. No matter what.”*

*“Because we're the good guys.”*

*“Yes.”*

*“And we're carrying the fire.”*

*“And we're carrying the fire. Yes.”*

*“Okay."*

*Page 66*

The boy and his father are heading towards the ocean in search of more "good guys". Throughout their journey they encounter the most horrid leftovers of humanity. The father assures the boy that they are "the good guys," who are "carrying the fire". This "fire" is the flame of humanity left alive inside their hearts. The metaphor gives them hope to keep walking and perhaps find others like themselves.

*“You won’t survive for yourself. I know because I would never have come this far. A person who had no one would be well advised to cobble together some passable ghost. Breathe it into being and coax it along with words of love. Offer it each phantom crumb and shield it from harm with your body. As for me my only hope is for eternal nothingness and I hope it with all my heart.”*

*Page 26*

Here, the man is talking to his wife, who later commits suicide – she’s telling him that he will shield the boy from harm, no matter what it takes. This is exactly what the man will do and it’s an important part of the book.

*Comparison of the book and the movie*

Similarities

-The chronological order of the story is mostly the same.

-The cold is clearly shown.

-The dialogs are exactly the same.

-The Horrors of cannibalism are shown really well.

-It is clearly shown how desperate humans are to survive in this new world.

-The boy and his father don't have names, this emphasizes that this could happen to anyone

Differences

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| --- | --- |
| **book** | **movie** |
| Only contains a few flashbacks. | More flashbacks |
|    The mother commits suicide. | The mother walks away from her husband and son. And probably dies in the cold night. |
|    Hope of renewal of the planet can be taken from a fish swimming in a stream | Hope of renewal of the planet can be taken from a beetle flew from a can of chewing tobacco |
|    They found clean water in a house, that helped them survive longer | Not shown |
|    In the book, the boy and father had lost their shopping cart and were therefore only able to take the food they could carry. They in fact ran out before reaching the coast. | They were able to take so much food that they were able to leave a can for a robber. And they still had enough when they reached the coast. |
| The fear of being seen was more clearly portrayed. | They would sit out in the open. |
| The boy and father follow a group of two men and a pregnant woman to see if they are safe. The woman gives birth - however, in the morning, the charred remains of the baby are found. The group ate the baby, rather than finding food for yet another mouth. | This segment isn’t in the movie. Could be because it’s a rather cruel and terrifying thing to happen; it might have not made the movie, because of this cruelness. |
| After the man shoots his flare gun at the shooter, it is unclear if the shooter of the arrow is dead. | The shooter of the arrow gets shot with a flare gun by the man and is found dead. |
| The boy is kindhearted and you as a reader really start to care for the boy. | The movie occasionally shows the kindheartedness of the boy that is portrayed in the book, but a lot less; he cries a lot in the movie and isn’t perceived as someone you would really care for too much. |

*Our opinion*

We found The Road to be an interesting book. Mainly because it really shows how desperate mankind can become, if survival is at stake. It also makes you think about how you would try to survive in those conditions. We definitely recommend this book to all of you, but do expect boys to like the story more than girls, as there really are some gruesome segments in the book.