

## Run Beyond the Walls

By Jonah Helbling

*The Maze Runner* is a 2014 dystopian film directed by Wes Ball and based on the novel of the same name by James Dashner in 2009. The movie stars Dylan O'Brien as Thomas, a teenager who wakes up with no memory of his past in a community of boys trapped in a mysterious maze. This adaptation follows the young adult novel closely, bringing to life the thrilling and suspenseful story of survival in a post-apocalyptic world.

The film begins with Thomas waking up in a metal box, ascending to a glade surrounded by towering walls. There, he is welcomed by a group of teenage boys, known as the Gladers, who have been living in the Glade for three years. The Glade is an enclosed area with its own ecosystem, which consists of its own courthouse, jail, hospital, map room, gear room, pantry house, farms, laundry sector, and harvest point. With a towering stone maze as its perimeter and four doors equally spaced apart along each of the four walls enclosing the Gladers. Only one door has ever opened in the Glade and it opens up to a massive maze. The Gladers must navigate the maze every day to try to find a way out, but their attempts have always been unsuccessful. The community is run by Alby (Aml Ameen) and his second-in-command, Newt (Thomas Brodie-Sangster), who explain to Thomas the rules of the Glade and the danger of the maze.

The film does an excellent job of establishing the world and building the mystery surrounding the maze and the Gladers. The cinematography is impressive, with sweeping shots of the maze and the surrounding landscape as well as using angles and crane movements to convey exactly what the characters are feeling or facing. The production design is equally

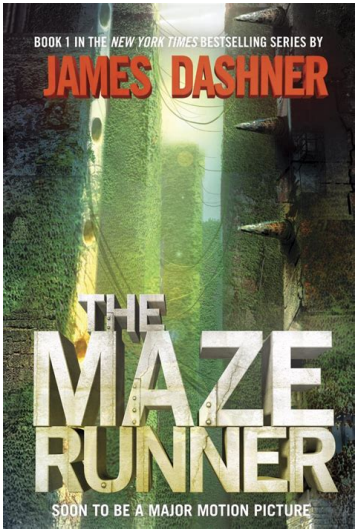
impressive, with the Glade feeling like a lived-in community with its own unique culture. The characters are introduced in a natural way, with Thomas gradually learning about each of them and their roles in the community and prying at each of them to find out more about the maze. The film's visuals and special effects are also noteworthy, with the maze itself being an impressive and intimidating structure. The maze is a central element of the film, and the filmmakers do an excellent job of using it to build tension and suspense. The creatures that inhabit the maze, known as Grievers, are also well-designed and menacing. The film's action sequences are well-staged and exciting, with the Gladers using their wits and physical abilities to try to survive.

The performances in *The Maze Runner* are uniformly strong, with O'Brien carrying the film with his engaging portrayal of Thomas. The supporting cast is equally impressive, with Ameen and Brodie-Sangster standing out in particular through their character development and sentiment towards Thomas. The chemistry between the Gladers feels genuine, with their banter and camaraderie helping to establish the community's dynamic. One of the film's strengths is its pacing, with the story unfolding at a steady clip that keeps the audience engaged throughout. The film's first act does an excellent job of building tension, with the Gladers gradually revealing more about the world and the danger that surrounds them. The second act ramps up the stakes, with Thomas and the other Gladers attempting to solve the maze and escape before it's too late. The final act delivers an exciting and satisfying conclusion that leaves the audience eager for more. The plot of the film remained the same as the book through and through and created an immersive experience into the maze. The overall theme and style of the film remain consistent

and invoke a thrilling adventure alongside relatable young teens facing some incredible obstacles.

One of the film's few weaknesses is its lack of character development. While the Gladers are an engaging group of characters, their personalities and motivations are not explored in depth. This is particularly true of the female characters, who are given little to do beyond being love interests and objects of rescue. The film also suffers from the common YA (Young Adult) adaptation problem of feeling rushed, with some plot points and character beats feeling underdeveloped in comparison to James Dashner's book.

Overall, *The Maze Runner* is an impressive adaptation that does justice to its source material. Everything from the opening scene to how the Grievors (creatures) were described is almost spot on to the book. The characters' personalities were perfectly overlaid and the actors did a phenomenal job playing the same person that was in the book. How the maze was depicted and what occurred in the maze directly related to how James Dashner explained it happening in the book, although the final escape was slightly different it still had the same heightened anticipation feeling as the book. The film captures the spirit of the novel, delivering a thrilling and suspenseful story of survival in a post-apocalyptic world. While it falls short in some areas, particularly in terms of character development, it is an entertaining and engaging film that will leave viewers eager to see what happens next.



Author: James Dashner

Ball

Genre: Dystopian Fiction

Director: Wes

