



The YA film franchises continue to pour out from Hollywood, making them as popular as ever. The Maze Runner

is the latest futuristic dystopian trilogy to get the big screen adaptation, but opts to change the stereotypical format from something less romantic in favor of more action. While far from perfect, it's still a welcoming approach that I expect will only get better as the franchise goes on.

For three years, a group of young boys have been trapped inside a massive maze with no memory of their past or why they've been put there in the first place. The boys live in the center of the Maze, known as The Glade. A doorway leading into the maze opens at the crack of dawn every morning and closes as the sun goes down every night. Those who explore the ever-changing pathways of the Maze are known as Runners, as they must cover as much ground as they can before the doors close because no one has ever survived a night within the maze due to mysterious creatures that have been come to be called Grievers. Every month, though, a lift rises from the ground with a new boy and supplies. Thomas (Dylan O'Brien) is the latest Greenie to come up from the darkness below and marks the beginning of what will be a big change in the Gladers' lives.

The Maze Runner is The Lord of the Flies

for a new generation of young adults. The film has a heavy focus on survival and working together as a community. Things have been running smoothly for the past three years under the leadership of Alby (Aml Ameen), the first boy who ever entered the Maze. He's built a system of rules that works and keeps everyone alive; a system that Thomas threatens by being curious about the Maze and why they've all been put there.

Opposite Thomas is Gally (Will Poulter), the self-appointed muscle of the Gladers. He follows the rules to a point and believes them to be absolute. As a result, he's constantly butting heads with Thomas. After Thomas' arrival things begin to change. The biggest change perhaps, is the Teresa (Kaya Scodelario), the first girl to arrive.

What I like most about The Maze Runner

is that the film doesn't diminish Scodelario's role to that of just some love interest of Thomas. Yes, they have a connection like in the books, but it's nothing romantic. Teresa is a strong enough character to stand on her own at times and like Thomas, questions the authority of the group.

While it's good to see a change in the type of characters these young adult film adaptations are getting, The Maze Runner

still has room for improvement. The dialogue between characters feels like the bare minimum to keep the story moving forward between one action scene and another. There are also a lot of secondary characters that don't get enough screentime to be fully developed. Characters like Minho (Ki-hong Lee), Newt (Thomas Brodie-Sangster), and Chuck (Blake Cooper) are all interesting in their own ways, but it's difficult to form any kind of attachment to them because they take backseat to Thomas, Teresa, and Gally for most of the film. Hopefully any sequels will be able to explore some of these characters further.

The Maze Runner

is in the same vein as other young adult adaptations, but is different enough to keep new audiences interested. It's Lord of the Flies meets LOST

. Fans of the novels will be pleased at how their favorite characters are represented on screen, and while there are a few kinks to work out, I'm actually intrigued to see where the story goes from here.

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