

Cold Mountain

Rated R

An epic film of the Civil War era, this movie outlines the profound impact of the war on one town: Cold Mountain, North Carolina. The central character is Inman (actor Jude Law), a young soldier who is wounded in battle and experiences great anguish when he witnesses the battlefield deaths of several friends. After receiving a pleading letter from his girlfriend, Ada (actress Nicole Kidman) to return home, Inman proceeds to walk the 1000 miles back to Cold Mountain.

There are actually two stories within the film. First, Inman's horrific experience as a soldier in the midst of one of the bitterest battles our country ever witnessed. Second, Ada's struggle to survive the hostility and perils endemic to the South's war-torn communities.

Through Inman's journey, we witness the life and death drama that becomes his every waking moment. His decision to return home to Ada is not the act of a coward, but one of a man driven to find a purpose for his life.

While Inman is trudging home, Ada is valiantly working to manage the family farm. This is no easy task, given her social standing and lack of experience. Meanwhile, her task is made easier by the appearance of a sassy, hard-working, farm hand named Rudy (actress Renee Zellweger).

I thought one of the most striking moments in the film was that of the townsfolk in church, singing fervently to God one moment, seconds later bolting out the door totally ecstatic about going to war. In all too familiar male bravado, the men exclaim that they will show those Yankees what kind of men they are. How heartbreaking this seems when reflecting back on the devastation, trauma, and abuse that the Civil War brought to our country. Unfortunately, we seem to have some sort of amnesia when it comes to learning the consequences of war as history demonstrates that we repeatedly find ourselves in conflicts with other nations.

"Cold Mountain" is superbly staged and acted. The music is especially powerful. The movie has already garnered 8 Golden Globe nominations. Still, the movie is rated R and very graphic at times.

by ***Curt Levang***