

# Holy adoption theme at the movies again, Batman!

We had seen the trailer for The Lego Batman Movie, and I knew we were going to have to see the film. We all loved The Lego Movie, and this one looked like more of the same.

When I happened to mention to a friend that we were going, though, she told me that adoption was a big part of the movie—and that I might want to be prepared.

Sigh.

Of course adoption is everywhere in this movie, I thought, as I watched it with our boys. I mean, there are superheroes involved. But there's a scene of an orphanage. Then there's Robin as an orphan begging Batman to adopt him. Then there's an adoption by Batman, who is at best a reluctant father figure who has his own challenges related to what family means. Then there's Batman's own loss of his parents and his confusing relationship with his own father figure. And on and on and on.

In our family, we love talking about adoption. But Lego Batman and I have very different perspectives on it. And sometimes I wish we could just go to the movies and go home.



Fortunately in this case, it was all so far-fetched it almost didn't matter. The portrayal of adoption was so absurd that we ended up laughing about it together later over dinner, as we discussed other movies that also portray adoption in a ridiculous way. And I loved that our children could bring up other examples and point out how off-the-wall the representations were.

What troubles me is not what our boys take away from these movies, however, but what their friends and classmates take away. They won't have the conversations later, where parents explain that that's not what an orphanage is like, or that that's not how adoptions occur.

Movies like this one perpetuate stereotypes about adoption from an early age—and without providing appropriate context or understanding. They are often hilarious, and we laugh and laugh our way through. The Kung Fu Panda movies tend to handle adoption with grace and thought. But some of the other movies we have seen leave me wincing.

Not every movie should have a trigger warning. But I would love for movies, especially children's movies, to handle topics related to loss—whether death or

adoption or divorce or another issue—with a little more sensitivity.

It's no surprise that orphans and adoption find their way into stories. In fiction, there's something mysterious and empowering about the path a child takes when his or her original parents aren't in the picture. No wonder those children turn out to have unexpected super powers and abilities.

I just wish that maybe, more often than not, people making a movie in which adoption is discussed would stop and put themselves in someone else's shoes. Why not pause to imagine what it might be like to be watching the movie while thinking of your own adoption story?

Sure, it's just entertainment. Most people watch, have a few laughs, go home, and never think about it again. But couldn't a movie be just as much fun if it were created with a little more thought and intention?

I bet it could—and it wouldn't take any superhero powers, either.