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UConn men's basketball playing Providence on Jan. 28, 2026. The Huskies went into the second half with only a slim lead, 41-37.
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Everyone needs to calm down about book to screen adaptations

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Jan. 9 of this year has been marked on my calendar for six months, as that was the release date of the highly anticipated Netflix movie "People We Meet on Vacation." "PWMOV" is an adaptation of one of my favorite authors of all time, Emily Henry's, second novel of the same name. To make matters more exciting for me, (and every poor relative and friend of mine I've been incessantly chatting about this movie too), it's the first of Henry's books to be adapted on screen. I even made my sister watch the movie the second she got home from her 12-hour shift on the release day because I couldn't wait a minute longer.

However, while we were watching the movie, we kept pointing out changes made to the source material, like how plots were combined or destinations switched for seemingly no reason. When the credits rolled, we couldn't help but feel mildly disappointed, as some of our favorite quotes were left out, and random additions just didn't make sense to us.

A couple days later, I rewatched the movie with my friend Tyler, who hadn't read the book. Since my audience had changed (I unfortunately love to talk during movies), I tried my best to view the movie as a new experience, just a normal rom-com, and not a version of a book I have read at least 8 times. And you know what? I honestly liked it a lot more on the second go-around. When you're not holding it up to the source material (a la comparison is the thief of joy), the movie is exactly what you signed up for: a vacation-set rom-com, with strong lead performances all around.

My second viewing didn't just affect my Letterboxd rating of 3.5 stars, but it also impacted my overall enjoyment of the movie. Just because every line of dialogue I found impactful wasn't included, doesn't make it a bad movie, or even a bad adaptation. It was still faithful to the characters (although moreso Poppy than Alex, but I digress) and their love story remained intact.

Therefore, not all book adaptations need to be entirely faithful to be good. To be honest, initially writing this article felt like sacrilege to me, because when I love a book, I live it: I will reread the same book multiple times in a year if I deem it worthy. So even giving any non-faithful adaptation a helping hand in reputation here stings a little, but I do think something can still be a good product without being a good adaptation. And, that being a good adaptation doesn't mean you need to recreate every single line from every single scene; you just need the overall sentiment and the standout moments.

This does differ for television shows in my opinion. I give a lot more leeway to a 90-minute movie of a 400-page book than I would a 10 episode limited series. Take the YA trilogy, "One of Us Is Lying" for example, they were given two seasons (16 episodes total) and not only do they butcher the source material (they change the plot twist almost entirely), the show itself is subpar in quality and entertainment value. Despite the 12-hour run time they're provided, they barely scrape by a mirrored image of the book series they're "adapting." On the other hand, the first season of "The Summer I Turned Pretty" includes a debutant ball as a central force for Belly's plot that doesn't exist in the book, but it still works. It drives the characters where they need to go and doesn't make a mess of the core story (although changing the time jump in the third season from two to four years was one of the most abhorrent choices in recent memory).

If every book adaptation is going to get mercilessly crucified online for getting a character's hair color wrong, or forgetting a pet cat, where is the room for opportunity? What streamer wants to adapt a story to an unforgiving audience? If the central plot and characters are still recognizable, how big of a punishment can you wield? And what's the point? It will just lead to less things getting adapted, or if they are being adapted, showrunners might take less care to be faithful in their choices because why bleed for a hostile audience? So yes, I too would prefer a very faithful adaptation, and I too, will still complain if the upcoming "Beach Read" movie isn't up to my extremely unrealistic expectations, but that won't make it a bad movie if it's not, it just won't make it the movie I pictured in my head, of my own volition. You're bound to be disappointed if you create an idealized version of something, and that's no crime, but it's also not one to create a good product, instead of a carbon copy, either.

COMIC BY ALEXA PAPPAS, STAFF ARTIST

