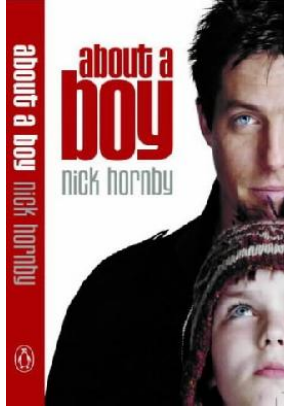


***About a Boy* (2002)**

Film Commentary by Chris Weitz and Paul Weitz



Awards:

2002 Boston Society of Film Critics Awards, Best Supporting Actress Toni Collette
2003 Empire Awards, United Kingdom, Best British Actor Hugh Grant
2003 Golden Camera Award, Best International Actor Hugh Grant
2003 Golden Satellite Award, Best Original Song “Something to Talk About”
2003 London Critics Circle Film Awards, British Actor of the Year, Hugh Grant
2003 U.S. Comedy Arts Festival, Best Studio Comedy Feature

Chapter 1: Two Boys * Main Titles

Who wrote the phrase “no man is an island?” John Donne is the correct answer to that game on the television, *Who wants to be a Millionaire?*, the British version. An element that is present in Nick Hornby’s novel, and to the directors this was a good summing up of the premise of the film, this statement will reoccur at the end of the movie. When you hit something on the head so obviously, you need to undercut it with a sense of humor. The statement stands true “no man is an island,” but at the same time, you can’t completely melt into some one else, you must somehow maintain some individuality. Almost any kind of statement that is made, they will undercut it with irony.



John Donne (pronounced like done, 1572 – March 31, 1631) was a Jacobean poet and preacher, representative of the metaphysical poets of the period. His works, notable for their realistic and sensual style, include sonnets, love poetry, religious poems, Latin translations, epigrams, elegies, songs, satires and sermons. His poetry is noted for its vibrancy of language and immediacy of metaphor, compared with that of his contemporaries.

Donne came from a loyal Roman Catholic family, and so he experienced persecution until his conversion to the Anglican Church. Despite his great education and poetic talents, he lived in poverty for several years, relying heavily on wealthy friends. In 1615 he became an Anglican priest and in 1621 Dean of St Paul's. Some scholars believe his literary works reflect these trends, with love poetry and satires from his youth, and religious sermons during his later years. Other scholars, such as Helen Gardner, question the validity of dating when most of his poems were published posthumously (1633). The exception to these is his Anniversaries which were published in 1612 and Devotions upon Emergent Occasions published in 1623. His sermons are also dated, sometimes quite specifically, by year and date.

The book was published in 1998, it was the third novel written by Nick Hornby, after hugely successful *Fever Pitch* and *High Fidelity*, both of which were made into feature films. *About A Boy* sold over one million copies in the U.K. alone and foreign rights were sold in more than 20 countries. The book features Hornby's trademark blend of comedy and drama.



Nick Hornby (born 17 April 1957 in Redhill, Surrey, England) is an English novelist and essayist. He is best known for the novels High Fidelity, About a Boy and the football memoir Fever Pitch. In his work he frequently touches upon sports, music, and the aimless and obsessive personalities of his main characters.

Tribeca productions, the New York based production company headed by Robert DeNiro and Jane Rosenthal, recognized the potential of Hornby's novel and optioned the rights in 1998 just prior to publication. "Nick Hornby has such an extraordinary voice," said producer Jane Rosenthal. "It was a natural book to turn into a movie. There aren't many writers who write with that vision in a way that can so easily be adapted for the screen."



For this opening sequence they took great care in not showing Hugh Grant's face until the last moment. The apartment design is done by Jim Clay, the production designer (name appears on screen); the point was to make it look like an advertisement, with the colors being predominantly blue and slate grey. These colors are in contrast to the colors of Nicholas house and Fiona's. You also have a size comparison, with Will's place being large and spacious and Fiona's almost claustrophobic, but the colors are much more vibrant. Compare and Contrast. They will

also film each two residents in a different style, here in Marcus's bathroom one of the few times they use a handheld camera, but generally speaking Marcus's house will be filmed with the camera looking down on them and not showing much background, not giving you much sense of space, as opposed to much more background.

This is the third film made by the Weitz brothers, with a budget of 27 million, premiered May 8, 2002 and released May 17, 2002 in America and released April 26, 2002 in the United Kingdom.

0:03:21 Being a Godparent

No acting by Hugh Grant here, he is very uncomfortable around children. One of the directors stated that Hugh Grant is uncomfortable around all humans. This child that you see blowing the raspberry is Ryan Speechley or Joseph Speechley (twins), totally unruly child, so you get this one shot



of him and then he was whisked off of the set, as they could not control him. So when you see Hugh referring to a child off camera or out of the frame, there is nobody there.

George Clooney was offered and turned down the lead role of Will Freeman. Emma Thompson was offered a role. Brad Pitt turned down the lead role of Will Freeman on the grounds that it was implausible that someone so attractive would need to pretend to be a single father to meet women. He nevertheless appears in the film (sort of) - he is on the cover of an issue of "Esquire" magazine that Will is reading in his flat.

As a way for the directors to deal with the narrative of the novel, they settled on voice-overs, so that you could understand the inner monologues of this character Will. This type of voice-over can be boring for an audience if it is explaining away various plot holes, and not giving life to the character. Thus you see them using it to great humorous effect here.

0:05:47 Walking to school with your mother

This scene was taken out of sequence here, it used to be a long walk to school where you got to meet more of Toni Collette, Fiona, Marcus's mother. They need to keep the story moving rapidly, and interweave it with Will's story at the same time, so that is why the scene was edited down to this version. At the beginning of the film Marcus says he would be able to take care of his mum (Toni Collette) if he were Haley Joel Osment. Toni Collette played Haley Joel Osment's mother in *The Sixth Sense*.

Chapter 2 (0:07:10) Fabulous Single Mums



Biography for Chris Weitz

Date of Birth, 1970, Studied at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, England.

Education: Chris was schooled at St. Paul's, London and Cambridge University.

Producer - filmography

1. "Cracking Up" (2004) TV Series (executive producer)
2. American Wedding (2003) (producer)
3. Dylan's Run (2002) (executive producer)
4. "Off Centre" (2001) TV Series (executive producer)
5. American Pie 2 (2001) (executive producer)
6. American Pie (1999) (producer)

Writer - filmography

1. Meet the Fokkers (2004)

Biography for Paul Weitz

Date of Birth 1966, Spouse Patricia Brown, 2001-present

Writer - filmography

2. About a Boy (2002) (screenplay)
3. "Off Centre" (2001) TV Series (writer)
4. Nutty Professor II: The Klumps (2000) (screenplay)
5. Antz (1998)

Director - filmography

1. "Cracking Up" (2004) TV Series
2. About a Boy (2002)
3. Down to Earth (2001)
4. American Pie (1999) (uncredited)

1. Meet the Fokkers (2004)

2. About a Boy (2002) (screenplay)
3. "Off Centre" (2001) TV Series (writer)
4. Nutty Professor II: The Klumps (2000) (screenplay)
5. Antz (1998)

Producer - filmography

1. "Cracking Up" (2004) TV Series (executive producer)
2. American Wedding (2003) (producer)
3. Dylan's Run (2002) (executive producer)

4. "Off Centre" (2001) TV Series (executive producer)
5. American Pie 2 (2001) (executive producer)

Director - filmography

1. "Cracking Up" (2004) TV Series
2. About a Boy (2002)
3. Down to Earth (2001)
4. American Pie (1999)

Location is a restaurant called *Otto's* in London, which is a fantastic location due to the ability to have this great depth of shot.

0:08:00 Thirteen takes to get this scene correct, in terms of timing out the voice-overs and landing the camera on the correct character as they are speaking. The way that they would time the voice-over is by having Chris or Paul, one of the directors reading the voice-over off screen. This is a great shot as they are not using cuts to emphasis things, the standard way to shoot this scene would be to bounce back and forth between the characters with standard close-up shots, as they each spoke. You will notice a lot of deliberate filming, planned filming with long shots, verses the numerous cutting between characters.

0:08:57 Take note of these two scrunched up on the couch here, you will see the reverse of this shot later with Marcus. This is an example of framing in a movie; you can frame a story or speech also.

0:10:44 You're breaking up with me

Nice work by the costume designer here, Joanna Johnston, as the woman getting angry at Hugh Grant here, their clothes get louder and louder.

Jump cutting here, by swiveling people out of the same chair. Hugh Grant the master of the facial shrug.

Peter Hedges assisted in the writing of the screenplay and receives credit for that work; he previously wrote *What's Eating Gilbert Grape?*

Chapter 3 (0:11:05) Bad Times

Watch the actual number of fish in the fish tank, there are only two shark like fish and the numbers will increase. This also works on the "No man is an Island" theme.. The directors thought this cut was extremely humorous to cut between from the comment Hugh makes about single moms to the one of Toni (Fiona) crying her eyes out. A little more humor here, "don't cry over spilt milk" (0:11:34), and here she is crying over spilt soy milk.

Continuity: When Fiona is trying to make cereal for breakfast, the editing makes the scene appear continuous, but she is holding the cereal box and then the milk in subsequent shots without having time to swap.

A motivating force of the film as the boy is sent out into the world to find another source of emotional support. Toni is one of those actresses that can carry on a conversation with you and then the directors could yell action, and she could switch emotions like that. A lot of actors that

have emotional scenes will be a wreck all day, and depressed setting themselves up for the scene they about to film.

0:13:18 The shot of the soccer ball hitting Marcus's head was filmed with a speed aperture control, which changes the speed of which the film is running, which allows you to slow shots down or speed them up. The director Chris was standing off screen and throwing a fake rubber ball at Marcus's head numerous times.

Biography for Hugh Grant

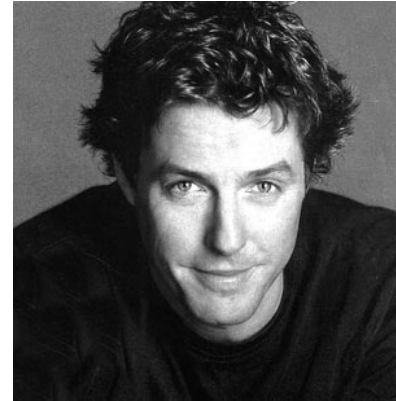
Birth name Hugh John Mungo Grant, **Date of birth** 9 September 1960, London

Height 5' 11"

Trade mark Plummy English accent.

Trivia

- Grant was arrested for lewd conduct after cops found him with Divine Brown, a prostitute, in his car. He pleaded no contest and got a \$1,180 fine and two years' probation. [1995]
- Opted not to do a nude scene in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) when a make up artist asked if he wanted definition painted on his body.
- Graduated from Oxford University with a degree in English.



Salary Average Salary in 2002 \$12.5 million

Actor - filmography

1. Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason (04) Daniel Cleaver
2. Love Actually (2003) The Prime Minister
3. Two Weeks Notice (2002) George Wade
4. Legend of the Lost Tribe (2002) (TV) Blitzen
5. About a Boy (2002) Will
6. Bridget Jones's Diary (2001) Daniel Cleaver
7. Small Time Crooks (2000) David Grant
8. Comic Relief: Doctor Who and the Death (1999) (V)
9. Hooves of Fire (1999) (TV) Blitzen
10. Mickey Blue Eyes (1999) Michael Felgate
11. Notting Hill (1999) William Thacker
12. Extreme Measures (1996) Dr. Guy Luthan
13. Restoration (1995) Elias Finn
14. Sense and Sensibility (1995) Edward Ferrars
15. Nine Months (1995) Samuel Faulkner
16. Englishman Who Went Up a Mountain, The (1995)
17. Awfully Big Adventure, An (1995) Meredith Potter
18. Changeling, The (1994) (TV) Alsemero
19. Four Weddings and a Funeral (1994) Charles
20. Sirens (1994) Anthony Campion
21. Night Train to Venice (1993) Martin Gamil
22. Remains of the Day, The (1993) Cardinal
23. Bitter Moon (1992) Nigel
24. Trials of Oz, The (1991) (TV) Richard Neville
25. Our Sons (1991) (TV) James
26. Impromptu (1991) Frederic Chopin
27. Big Man, The (1990) Gordon
28. "Till We Meet Again" (1989) (mini) TV Series
29. Champagne Charlie (1989) (TV) Charles Heidsieck
30. Lady and the Highwayman, The (1989) (TV) Lord
31. Dawning, The (1988) Harry
32. Nocturnes (1988) Chopin
33. Nuit Bengali, La (1988) Allan
34. Remando al viento (1988) Lord Byron
35. Lair of the White Worm, The (1988) Lord James
36. White Mischief (1987) Hugh
37. Maurice (1987) Clive Durham
38. Lord Elgin and Some Stones of No Value (1986) (TV)
39. Dream Lover, The (1986/II) (TV) Robert Drover
40. "Ladies in Charge" (1986) TV Series
41. "Last Place on Earth, The" (1985) (mini) TV Series
42. Honour, Profit & Pleasure (1985) (TV) Burlington
43. Jenny's War (1985) (TV) Peter Baines
44. "Detective, The" (1985) (mini) TV Series
45. Privileged (1982) (as Hughie Grant) Lord Adrian

Chapter 4 (0:13:42) S.P.A.T.

As Will discovers this invitation to attend a SPAT meeting, they film it in a porn style, as Will's motives to attend this meeting are defiantly misplaced, thus the music here by Badly Drawn Boy. Previous CD release was *Hour of the Bewilderbeast*, the directors listened to this music to set a mood as they were working on the screenplay, and wanted to use him for the soundtrack. Kind of a poor movie, with psychedelic sounds.

As Will comes down these stairs they give you a horror film shot, to make it as scary as possible.

The woman on the right of Will is Janine Duvitski, she is in Mike Lee's film *Abigail's Wedding*. This is not a set, but the basement of a church. Beverly Milward, the woman with the dyed blonde spiked hair, in real life is a bouncer and occasionally a glamour photography model.

While Will is talking about his make believe child here, they give you the music cue from his dating days, to show you that he is lying here.

0:17:18 Baby seat shopping

This scene was cut down from its original version, but is available on the deleted scenes portion of the DVD version.

Comedy is about reaction shots, and here is an example of a fairly wooden reaction shot.



Biography for Toni Collette

Date of birth 1 November 1972, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Birth name Antonia Collette, **Height** 5' 6", **Spouse** Dave Galafassi, 2003-present.

Actress - filmography

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Like Minds (2005) | 15. 8 ½ Women (1999) Griselda/Sister Concordia |
| 2. In Her Shoes (2005) Rose | 16. Velvet Goldmine (1998) Mandy Slade |
| 3. Last Shot, The (2004) Emily French | 17. Boys, The (1998) Michelle |
| 4. Connie and Carla (2004) Carla | 18. Diana & Me (1997) Diana Spencer |
| 5. Japanese Story (2003) Sandy Edwards | 19. James Gang, The (1997) Julia Armstrong |
| 6. Hours, The (2002) Kitty Barlowe | 20. Clockwatchers (1997) Iris Chapman |
| 7. Dirty Deeds (2002) Sharon | 21. Emma (1996) Harriet Smith |
| 8. About a Boy (2002) Fiona | 22. Pallbearer, The (1996) Cynthia |
| 9. Changing Lanes (2002) Michelle | 23. Così (1996) Julie |
| 10. Dinner with Friends (2001) (TV) Beth | 24. Lilian's Story (1995) Young Lilian Singer |
| 11. Magic Pudding, The (2000) (voice) Meg Bluegum | 25. Arabian Knight (1995) (voice) Nurse/Good Witch |
| 12. Hotel Splendide (2000) Kath | 26. This Marching Girl Thing (1994) Cindy |
| 13. Shaft (2000) Diane Palmieri | 27. Muriel's Wedding (1994) Muriel Heslop |
| 14. Sixth Sense, The (1999) Lynn Sear | 28. Spotswood (1992) Wendy Robinson |

Chapter 5 (0:18:10) The Weird Kid

Watch the baby here as he comes out of the house in the arms of Suzie (Victoria Smurfit) he will look directly into the camera. This is always a problem with children, where they will look out of the pretend world of the film and into the real world of their surroundings. Watch for this on sitcoms with small children present.



Filming location is Regent's Park, London, England, United Kingdom, on one of the few sunny days they had on the shoot, for the majority of the shoot it was "pissing" down rain. Nice to have Nicholas walking back and forth in the background, it adds dynamics to the shot. The thing a director has to worry about is if Marcus goes out of frame on the right, he must reappear on the right. So it does limit the editing possibilities and restricts what they can do in the editing room, but these long shots help.

The lyrics to this tune does not appear in the novel, so they gave the assignment to Peter Brewless, was to come up with the worst Christmas jingle in history, and it appears he succeeded. Partial lyrics to this song appear in the second printing of the novel, as a tie-in to the film.



For this close-up of all three of them held in a medium shot as the walk forward is being filmed with a Steadicam, (Camera stabilizing device developed in the seventies that hooks up to the operator's body with a harness. It allows for moving the camera without using dollies or cranes, giving a smooth flowing image throughout a scene. i.e. running up stairs, going in and out of elevators. Often used as a POV camera.) the camera operator is walking backwards.

Chapter 6 (0:20:32) Duck Killer

While the directors were writing the screenplay, they listened to Damon Gough as Badly Drawn Boy in his first CD *Wildest*. They thought since it worked so great to listen to while they were writing, then maybe it would also

work great as a score for the film. His music is tuneful but oblique as far as its lyrics and emotionally rich at the same time.

The costuming is perfect, again all created by Joanna Johnston, which makes Marcus out as a totally hopeless individual.

0:22:02 The dead duck is a real dead duck, and the blame for that goes to Barry Gibbs the prop master. For Londoners the accent is extremely import, here is an example of the directors letting this one slide by, the Park Keeper (Sidney Livingstone) has a Yorkshire accent, and he would not be working the Regent's Park area.

0:23:03 This little bit of magic realism, what ever you want to call it, is a risk but it serves two purposes, (1) it prepares the audience for what is about to happen here in this scene and (2), it avoids the shock value and keeps you mindful of the fact that you are inside of these characters heads.

Magic realism (or magical realism) is an artistic genre in which magical elements or illogical scenarios appear in an otherwise realistic or even "normal" setting. As used today the term is broadly descriptive rather than critically rigorous. The term was initially used by German art critic Franz Roh to describe painting which demonstrated an altered reality, but was later used by Venezuelan Arturo Uslar-Pietri to describe the work of certain Latin American writers. The Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier (a friend of Uslar-Pietri) used the term "lo real maravilloso" (roughly "marvelous reality") in the



prologue to his novel The Kingdom of this World (1949). Carpentier's conception was of a kind of heightened reality in which elements of the miraculous could appear while seeming natural and unforced. Carpentier's work was a key influence on the writers of the Latin American "boom" that emerged in the 1960s. (Pictured The Summitt, a giclée on canvas by Michael Parkes.) Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magical_realism

Chapter 7 (0:23:23) Emergency

Here is an oversized doorknob being used to get that reflection that you see in the doorknob.

Jump cutting be used to get us from point A to point B. (Jump cut – A cut that appears to jump, or mismatch between shots in a scene.)

A jump cut is a cut in film editing where the middle section of a continuous shot is removed, and the beginning and end of the shot are then joined together. The technique breaks continuity in time and produces a startling effect. Any moving objects in the shot will appear to jump to a new position. In classical continuity editing, jump cuts are considered a technical flaw. Most cuts in that editing style occur between dissimilar scenes or significantly different views of the same scene to avoid the appearance of a jump. Every effort is made to make cuts invisible and unobtrusive. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jump_cut



A cut from shot one to shot two, abruptly jarring the audience.

0:26:40 Notice the exit of Will in his car as it is all out of focus, which is where Will is as an individual, uncertain, unsure about where he is headed in all of this, great metaphor established by the image.

0:26:53 The song here and the lyrics, tell us what the note is about, verses having the character read the note out loud.

0:27:25 Mom returns home

Continuity: The vase of flowers that Marcus places on the table (just when he finds his mother's suicide note) moves repeatedly between shots.



Great little stage business as he straightens his hair, something he did prior to the take beginning and the directors told him to do it within the shot, it is one of those small gestures which means a lot. Here is a boy who is really angry with his mother for what has happened in his life, and he is worried about keeping up personal appearances.

Toni Collette (Fiona Brewer) does a great job here of walking a kind of fine line, from being silly to explaining her actions to her son, which she really does love. She also exhibits a type of spirit which enables the audience to know that this woman can out live her depression.

0:28:16 This was the audition scene that they used to audition the young actors for the Marcus part.

Chapter 8 (0:29:49) Cool Uncle Will

Will here is doing the direct equivalent to when Marcus was cleaning his hamster cage earlier. Will is less responsible and involved in more childish activities than Marcus. The camera flows real smoothly to show how Will's day sort of elapses. Smooth painless shots, to show his self indulgence, moving the camera as much as possible.

0:30:16 As Will describes web-based research as a "unit of time" in his day, he is seen typing the URL supermodelswithseethroughtops.com. This is actually an active Web site consisting of only a picture of the Pope in his "Pope-mobile".

0:31:40 Now we are about a half hour into the movie and the plot is in motion. Marcus decides to start stalking Will as he doesn't believe that his mother will be around for him in the future.

This movie is about the tenacity of this little child, how he sorts of cohorts people into caring for one another. The character of Will is so far away from the stereotypes of what a man should be in society. He doesn't have a job; he is certainly not paternal towards anybody, so that is why it is particularly appropriate that he is in this salon taking this call, with only woman around him.

There really is a lot of voice-overs in this movie, and normally today that is considered a death sentence to a film, audiences have long gotten away from the voice-over period of the 50s and 60s.

0:32:25 First date

This is the same restaurant; we are just in another part of it. Notice the woman behind Will, they had to change that dress, the original dress had almost no back, but then they realized everyone would be looking at her and not Will if they didn't change the costuming.

The choice of the song has many origins, first it belongs to the directors childhood memories, and the sentiments are so beautiful and poetic, and yet it is the kind of song, that is taken out of the context of its time is open to mockery and cynical people, but they have great use of this song later in the film.

0:34:24 Will walking by the soup kitchen

These are the opening refrains of a song that will come into play much later, just introducing it here.

0:34:34 Telemarketing

Here is an eloquent Rack Focus done here, where the focus shifts from the background to the foreground, with Will on the telemarketing donation circuit. This is based on a shot that you can see in the movie *Casino*, where you see Joe Pices crew for the first time, where there are two different levels of focus on the screen.

(Rack Focus - A shot where focus is changed while shooting. Unlike a Follow Focus shot, a rack focus shot is usually done not from the necessity of keeping someone in focus but to shift attention from one thing to another. Source: A Glossary of Film Terms, written and designed for the web by Joel Schlemowitz, New Schools Film Production Department)

Chapter 9 (0:35:10) Will's New Friend

Filmed on location in an area of London called Clerkenwell, which is an extraordinary area, kind of a medieval area of London, very trendy and rapid gentrified. It has a lot of interesting architecture everywhere; you can see Victoria period reflected into modern facades. At the corner here with the traffic is Smithfield Meat Market on the left (0:35:50). This is where a horrible outbreak of hoof-n-mouth disease broke out while they were shooting, so the market was closed.

This doorway that Will is standing in was built by the production design team; they wanted to add depth to the shot, so when you see Will's perspective you are looking down the street, as opposed to filming him against a wall or doorway. Adding depth to a shot really changes the look of the shot. Also if they didn't do this, across the street was a church with a large lot in front of it, so the lot would have appeared to be in the country and not in an up and coming part of London.

0:37:56 In this shot with the heat rising, they had a burner under the lens to get this affect. They wanted to shoot it like this kid really does pose a threat to Will's peace of mind, a borrowed shot from *The Gunslinger*.

A Bang and Olfesson stereo, for one of Will's grown-up toys, this scene is described in the novel really great, and here they try to replicate it. The scene was edited to the music, they were not sure what music was to be used, previous to filming him pressing the button, it was the music editor that was able to combine it make it fit rhythmically with the song.

0:39:15 Here is that reverse of the previous shot you saw in the beginning of the movie with Will and his current girlfriend on the sofa, framing.



0:39:54 Movies always have to show the progression of time, and here is a nice example of one way to do it. Marcus is constantly in the school uniform, where Will gets to change into all of these trendy outfits. It begins with him not welcome, to him being expected and welcomed.

0:40:49 Walking with Mum

This is part of that beginning scene with Marcus walking to school with his mother; they cut up the scene and placed it here, which works much better as an introduction to Marcus's mother. It also makes sense that he begins questioning his mother, after he has spent time with Will.

0:41:27 Will's first attempt to be a human being, which he can only do while watching *Zena Princess Warrior*, as the flashback of the suicide appears, it is the same shot as before but it has a lot more contrast in it, with the light and dark, and it is overexposed with the light glaring in. Notice Will says "Fucking hell" and the MPA allowed it to stand without giving it an R-rating, this film carries a PG-13 rating.

0:42:53 Will shopping for liquor.

Will has a terribly low self-esteem; he doesn't recognize that he is a good mentor and that he is good for young Marcus. This is a parallel match, if Marcus can have a vision of his mother, than Will can have a vision of his father. What they were subtle in attempting to say, if you missed it, was that Will's father might of hide his emotions with drinking, Magic Realism.

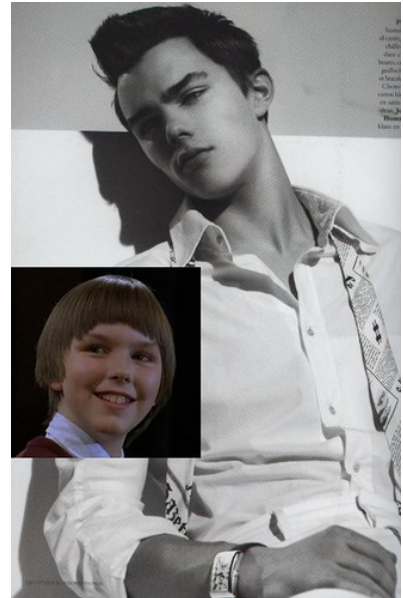
Chapter 10 (0:46:00) Cool New Shoes

In the apartment they introduce the guitar, so that later in the film you are not shocked that this guy can play the guitar.

0:46:14 Sketchers, not the first choice, but the only company that was willing to work with them wholeheartedly, Nike was originally slated here, but pulled their endorsement of the film three days before they went to shoot in their store. Great second missed high five in the film.

Chapter 11 (0:48:00) Marcus in the Middle

They told young Nicholas Hoult (Marcus) to think of something sad for this shot. He is only eleven years old and quite a happy kid, so he didn't know what to think about. After they got the shot, Nicholas came up to the directors and said, "Do you want to know what I was thinking about?" and he stated, "nothing," then walked off laughing.



Nice acting by Toni here, as she gets upset she demonstrates how deep her love is for her son. They are treading around the sexual issue here involving adult relationships with children, the relationship between Will and Marcus is more like mentor and pupil or like best friends. In the book this scene takes place in front of Will's door, but it is good to place it in the most embarrassing venue as possible. Look at the nice backlighting on Marcus, it appears that he has a halo of light around him. Nice counter point of Marcus's voice-over here and of Will finally caring enough about something to lose his cool.

0:50:42 Marcus shouts to stop Will from mentioning his mother's suicide attempt; later on you will notice Will doing the same thing to Marcus, nice bit of parenting. It is a nice way to show characters taking care of one another, with out them talking about it obviously.

This moment when Will gets invited back into Marcus life, takes place at an entirely different time frame.

Chapter 12 (0:52:26) Christmas

This shot is a nice way to show that Will is different from the masses of humanity, notice that he is walking in one direction and everyone else is traveling in the opposite direction, and remember it is easier to go with the flow than to go against the flow. So many clichés apply to this image; *‘it’s harder for a fish to swim up stream than down,’ ‘lions don’t lay down with sheep,’* etc. This is a group of everyday workers going to work in the equivalent area of Wall Street in London, they are not extras. They were surprised as they thought people would be spinning around saying, “Oh, look there’s Hugh Grant.” Only in London could you get away with that kind of shot and attitude by the general public.

Notice in the video store the word “Horror” over his head, this is how he feels about what he is going to be doing.

0:53:16 Christmas party

Toni had a cold on this day of filming. Grandmother was added, a character that does not appear in the first printing of the novel, Nick Hornby was not thrilled about her addition to this scene.

Identifying sub-plots and motivations for characters, that takes us into the back story of the characters. Fiona says she loves to hear her son sing, and you hear Clive (Mark Drewry) Marcus’s father groan to his girlfriend, indicating that could be one reason they got a divorce.

Continuity: The box of the Sony Walkman CD player that Will gives to Marcus can be seen on the coffee table before Marcus has unwrapped it.

The song “Shake your Ass” used in two films by the Weitz brothers, kind of an obsession by the brothers for this number.

This is a set built at Shepperton Studios in London, and outside of the window is a painted backdrop, normally today we use photographs, so this is rare that you get to see a painted backdrop of this size.



Camera cuts to Will for a little beat as Marcus is defending him. The camera then slowly zooms in so we know that Will realizes he means something in this young kid’s life. Here is where Will stops Marcus from talking about his mother’s suicide attempt.



At English Christmas’s they have crackers, which when you open them, they have these weird little paper hats inside of them.

Factual Errors: Will states in the narration that, as a result of the events

at the Christmas meal, first Marcus met a girl and then he did. The meal happens at Christmas and Will meets his girl at a New Year's Eve party. In between times Marcus meets Ellie in school. But in the UK there is no school between Christmas and New Year.

Chapter 13 (0:58:33) Rachel

They do something interesting here; within the cut they change camera lenses, so you get the background becoming further away from these two subjects. It is something like a 22 mm lens, which is a wide lens to us on a close-up; you also get Hugh's face distorted by the use of this lens. One night to shoot this scene, and it was ending up at about 4 a.m. All of the people in the background are pretending to talk, as we are recording the dialogue in the foreground, normally when you get a shot like this if you concentrate on the actors in the background you get some really terrible acting moments.

Chris and Paul Weitz inadvertently provided some on-set entertainment during the shoot; with the increasing number of push-ups they challenged each other to between camera reloads, even on rainy location days.

Rachel played by Rachel Weisz. The overhead shot was reproduced in the studio, the floor in the apartment couldn't hold the weight of the crane, and thus everything had to be recreated for this shot.

Biography for Rachel Weisz

Height 5' 7" **Date of birth** 7 March 1971, London, England, UK

Mini biography Rachel Weisz was born on the 7th March, 1971 in London, England to Ruth, a Jewish-Austrian psychoanalyst and George, a Jewish-Hungarian inventor. Rachel was a model when she was 14 and began acting during her studies at Cambridge. While there, she formed a theatre company called Talking Tongues, which won the Guardian Award, at the Edinburgh Festival, for its take on Neville Shouhall's Washbag. Rachel went on to star on stage in the lauded Sean Mathias revival of Coward's Design For Living. It was a role that won Rachel a vote for Most Promising Newcomer by the London Critic Circle. Rachel has starred in many movies, including Mummy, The (1999), Enemy at the Gates (2001) and Stealing Beauty (1996). Rachel can next be seen in the movies, *Shape of Things, The* (2002) _ and About a Boy (2002). Rachel is currently living in London and is single, but has dated Oscar-winning director, Sam Mendes.



Trivia

- Studied English at Trinity Hall, Cambridge.
- Studying English at Cambridge University, Weisz formed the Talking Tongues theater company and at 1991's Edinburgh Festival won a student drama award for a play she wrote and acted in.
- Lives in a \$450,000 London apartment, drives a Jaguar.

Actress - filmography

1. Barry (2004) Barry
2. Fountain, The (2005)
3. Constant Gardener, The (2005) Tessa
4. Constantine (2005) Angela Dodson/Isabel Dodson
5. Daisy Winters (2004) Daisy's Mother
6. Envy (2004) Debbie Dingman
7. Runaway Jury (2003) Marlee
8. Confidence (2003) Lily
9. Shape of Things, The (2003) Evelyn
10. About a Boy (2002) Rachel
11. Mummy Returns, The (2001)
12. Enemy at the Gates (2001) Tania Chernova
13. This Is Not an Exit: The Fiction (00) Lauren Hynde
14. Beautiful Creatures (2000) Petula
15. Tube Tales (1999) (TV) (segment Rosebud)
16. Sunshine (1999) Greta
17. Mummy, The (1999) Evelyn Carnahan
18. My Summer with Des (1998) (TV) Rosie
19. I Want You (1998/I) Helen
20. Land Girls, The (1998) Ag (Agapanthus)
21. Swept from the Sea (1997) Amy Foster
22. Bent (1997) Prostitute
23. Going All the Way (1997) Marty Pilcher
24. Chain Reaction (1996) Dr. Lily Sinclair
25. Stealing Beauty (1996) Miranda
26. Death Machine (1995) Junior Executive
27. Seventeen (1994) (TV)

- 28. White Goods (1994) (TV) Elaine
- 29. Dirtysomething (1993) (TV) Becca
- 30. "Scarlet and the Black, The" (1993) (mini) TV Series

Producer - filmography

- 1. Shape of Things, The (2003) (producer)

Nick Moore the editor on this film does some nice jump cuts as Marcus listens to the CD in the school halls. The really dirty words had to be dropped out here, as it would be too unrealistic to think of Marcus listening to it and enjoying it.

You encounter some nice English slang expressions here, 'taking a piss,' means to pull someone's leg or lead them on, in the book you will notice plenty of English slang, such as;

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Cheers | Hello or Good-bye |
| Wanker | penis or dick |
| Queue | lining up |
| Nipping out | ditching |
| Headmaster | principal |
| Trollop | Prostitute |
| Lorry | Truck |
| Lift | Elevator |
| Bugger-off | F-off, Exit immediately |
| Taking a piss | Pulling ones leg |
| Piss off | Get out of here, F off |
| Flat | Apartment |
| Wrong end of the stick | Wrong idea |
| Bullocks | Balls or damn it |

Corridor in a school, in an English school there is not lockers in the halls and it is not a common area for hanging out and talking to your friends.

Chapter 14 (1:02:47) My Son Marcus

For a brief moment, you assume it is Will's place, but it is Marcus's place and Will is asking for help now.

Filming location is the London Zoo located in Regent's Park; they shot at this location as they wanted to have monkeys in the image, much like *American Pie*. This was also in the middle of the English hoof-n-mouth epidemic so everyone entering the zoo had to dip there feet into antiseptic.

1:03:40 Started filming in Clerkenwell in North London in April of 2001, cast and crew spent seven weeks on location filming the exterior shots. After seven weeks on location, the production moved to Shepperton Studios to shoot the interior sequences at Will's apartment and Fiona's house.

Marcus swearing here is a sign of him growing up and also a sign of his loss of innocence. Dialogue here is from the book; Nick Hornby was a school teacher so he is good at writing the way that kids talk.

1:05:13 Continuity: As Rachel is cleaning up for Will and Marcus, she picks up a wine glass about half full, but when she sets it down, it is empty.

1:05:40 All of the set dressing in this room is supposed to give you a clue that these two kids will never get along, the boy Ali, played by Augustus Prew. In Ali's room (Rachel's son), you can see

a flag for the football (soccer) team *Arsenal*. Nick Hornby, author of the book on which the movie is based is a die-hard Arsenal supporter.

1:07:03 The shot of Rachel and Will on the sofa, is done with a diffuser on the lens, which breaks up light and makes it softer.

(Diffusion - 1.: A filter used on the camera to create a soft focus effect. 2.: A white or pearlescent sheet of material used on a movie light to soften the shadows. Source: A Glossary of Film Terms, written and designed for the web by Joel Schlemowitz, New Schools Film Production Department)

Chapter 15 (1:10:26) Truth and Consequences

In the book, Rachel ends up forgiving Will by the end of the scene, but in the movie they wanted to place more pressure on Will.

This is a change for the character of Will, a year ago he would not have fallen for this woman Rachel, but now he has had this experience with Marcus which allows him to become a more vulnerable human being.

As the truth is exposed here, Rachel's eye line will become closer to the camera, and Will becomes more distant, and then as he is losing his grip on her, the camera moves her slowly away from him.

Chapter 16 (1:14:14) Something for Mum

As Marcus comes into his house, this is the same shot as to when he discovered his mother's attempted suicide.

They were unable to tilt the camera here, so the desk is being raised up and lowered to get this shot.

1:16:23 Notice the fish now, they have multiplied, there are more now than before, "no man is an island".

As Nicholas walks into the living room following Will, he is stepping over the tracks of the camera. Nobody questions it, as this kid does have a weird walk.

1:18:35 Nice shot to see the world is being turned upside down, to make the point that this is not a good decision for Marcus to sing at the school concert.

Chapter 17 (1:22:00) Worried about Marcus

Nice to recap what has happened in the first act and play it again in the third act.

Continuity: The story is set in London in the run-up to Christmas (Will cringes on hearing his father's Christmas jingle in the supermarket and Marcus wears a silly woolen hat throughout). However, in almost every exterior shot, it is clear that the film was shot in the height of summer.

We can see this from the bright sunlight and short shadows in the scenes where Marcus is door stepping Will (after school in London in November it is already dark) and in the crowd scene when Will wanders through a throng of office workers, everyone is wearing light summer suits and some of the men are even in shirt-sleeves.

1:23:56 This car is on a trailer, with the camera truck in front of them filming them. They filmed it with two cameras running at the same time, so that they wouldn't have to jump back and forth with cuts.

A misfire by the directors as they have Will say, "okay you park it." The directors said that the only person who laughed at the shot was their mother.

Chapter 18 (1:24:00) The School Concert

The NY Times called this scene 'horrible', mostly as it is a huge change from the novel.

Nice little implication story, that Marcus would hire a friend to accompany him, takes you outside of the movie. Will states his philosophy of life, that if you are dependant on somebody else for your happiness, they can also make you unhappy.

They build to the moment that somebody has to save this kid.

1:32:15 Then we switch positions; remember the soccer ball hitting Marcus in the head, now we have the apple for Will.

Great little story about the kid who throw the apple. He was originally hired to come in and do a magic act for this talent show, but they had to cut the act, as they needed acts that contrasted with what Marcus was going to do on stage. The kids dad approached the directors and said, "Listen my kid came all the way from Wales are you not going to use him in your movie?" and the directors responded by saying, "Okay, he can throw the apple." The fact that the father might have beat up the directors might have influenced their decision.

1:33:02 Magic Hour of filming here, and this was one of the first days of filming, which show how well Nicholas was in the groove of the movie.

Chapter 19 (1:33:02) No Man Is an Island

The change of the character in the book is slightly different, not sure if the movie takes it as far.

1:34:47 The Amnesty International guy is pleasing the audience here by letting them know that Fiona has a chance for happiness.

1:35:40 Now the apartment is full of people, verses being full of things, notice all of the fish in the tank!

They copy a shot from the film *Four Hundred Blows*, where the kid looks into the camera and smiles back at the audience.

Nick Hornby also wrote *High Fidelity* and most recently *How to be Good*. What he is addressing is man's fate, and especially man's fate in his 30s.

There is a mixture of cynicism and hope in the film, trademarks of early filmmaker's such as Billy Wilder. Both of the directors are extremely intelligent, they just have a very childish sense of humor, as evidenced with *American Pie*. Individuals on the set commented, that when there was down time you could find the directors sitting in their chairs reading a novel.

Hugh Grant said that he was drawn to this character as it was a chance for him to "play shallow and trendy."

The whole movie is a balancing act between humor and pathos, (Pathos is an element in artistic expression that evokes pity or compassion.) and if you go too far in one direction, you lose your balance completely. Hugh Grant describes it as a knife edge of tone, which can freak you out with the balancing act of it all.

When the directors announced it was a wrap for Nicholas, he cried because he was so upset the experience had come to an end. It took a *Play Station 2* given to him by the filmmakers for a job enormously well done to stop the tears.

Continuity: At the end of the movie, before Will sits on the couch with Marcus, he picks up a nearly full bottle of beer. When he sits on the couch, the beer bottle is almost empty.

They ended the wrap party with a quintessentially British experience, not to mention a big send-off; the producers organized a farewell cricket game at Roehampton.

Chapter 20: End Titles

DVD Includes Bonus Materials:

Spotlight on location: The Making of About A Boy (12 minutes, if time allows there are some good filming shots and interviews, but all of the important information is in the lecture.)

Deleted Scenes

- Walking with Marcus

- SPAT meeting improvisation

- Baby seat shopping

- Walking in the Park/Santa's Super Sleigh

- Marcus invites Will on the date/Planet Hollywood/Date at Restaurant

- Countdown/talking on the sofa

- Going to Rachel's

- Stealing Marcus new CD player/Ellie walks home with Marcus

- Romantic Resolution between Will and Rachel

Exciting Music Videos by Badly Drawn Boy

Santa's Super Sleigh lyrics to the entire song

Filming Locations for the film

Bayswater, London, England, UK
Clerkenwell, London, England, UK
Hakkasan Restaurant, Hanway Place, London, England, UK
Hanway Place, London, England, UK
Kentish Town, London, England, UK
Lady Margaret Road, London, England, UK
London Zoo, Regent's Park, London, England, UK
London, England, UK
Notting Hill, London, England, UK
Oseney Crescent, London, England, UK
Regent's Park, London, England, UK