

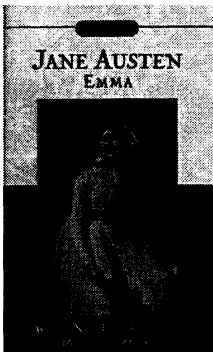
## CLASSICS INTO FILMS FOR TEENS

By Katrine Wilkinson

Writers, producers, and directors have been adapting classic literature for the big screen since the beginning of film. For the past few decades, there have been a number of classics made into films that will appeal to teens. Sometimes it only takes some contemporary actors and modern settings to give these timeless stories a new edge and a new audience. The following is a list of classic works that have been turned into movies for teen audiences.

### Emma/Clueless

At the top of the list is the classic novel *Emma* written by Jane Austen in 1816.

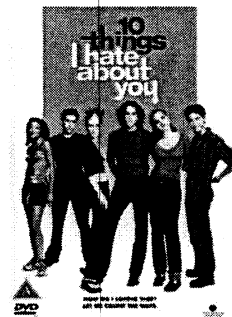


There have been a few film adaptations of this novel but perhaps the most notable for teens is the 1995 title *Clueless*.

The movie stars Alicia Silverstone as Cher Horowitz, a wealthy teenager that lives in Beverly Hills, California. Cher is full of good intentions but her misguided attempts at finding love for a friend places her in awkward situations. Jane Austen's novels never lack in the fairy tale elements that transcend time or generations; the story of Emma's search for love makes it an ideal romantic story.

### The Taming of the Shrew/Ten Things I Hate About You

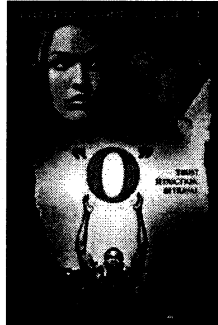
The 1999 film *Ten Things I Hate About You* is a modern re-telling of William Shakespeare's classic play *The Taming of the Shrew*. The film follows a group of teenagers in high school. Larisa Oleynik plays Bianca, the youngest sister who tries to convince her father to change his no-dating rule. After much debate, her father reluctantly



agrees to his daughter's request on one condition: Bianca is allowed to date but only if her older sister, who has no interest in dating, does as well. Bianca must try to convince her sister to date before she can also. The film's contemporary take of Shakespeare's work is funny and intelligent.

### Othello/'O'

*Othello*, another Shakespeare play, made it to the big screen as the 2001 film 'O'. The names are changed to reflect the modern setting but the story remains the same. In 'O' Odin represents Othello and Desdemona becomes Desi. The film is set in a high school, where Odin and Desi are the popular couple in love. He is the star basketball player and she is the pretty girl. A plan is hatched to break up the happy couple by two jealous characters. Allegations of cheating and betrayal push Odin to his breaking point.



The story ends in a series of tragedies as 'O' follows the plot of Shakespeare's classic to its bloody end.

### She's All That/Pygmalion

*She's All That* is based on the play

*Pygmalion* by George

Bernard Shaw. *She's*

*All That* is set in high

school and revolves

around the makeover

of the artistic but geeky character Laney,

played by Rachel Leigh Cook. To save his

popularity after his girlfriend breaks up with

him for a TV star, Zack, played by Freddie

Prinze Jr., attempts to turn Laney from geek

to chic after taking the challenge on as a bet.

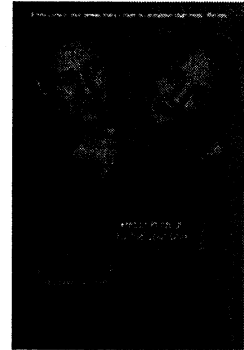
The changes work, Laney becomes popular,

and they end up falling for each other in the

process. It's also relevant to note that the

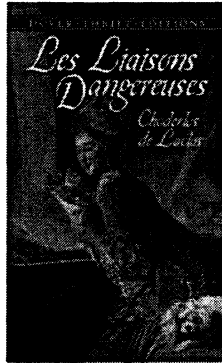
classic film *My Fair Lady* (1964) was also

based on Shaw's play.



### Cruel Intentions/Dangerous Liaisons

*Cruel Intentions*, the 1999 film based in a prestigious Manhattan private school, is based on the novel *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (*Dangerous Liaisons*) written by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos. In *Cruel Intentions*, Sebastian, a wealthy and irresponsible teen with a reputation for stirring up trouble, and his malicious stepsister manipulate fellow students. Sebastian is persuaded by his stepsister to seduce the new headmaster's daughter. The story ends when the tables are turned on the two teens.



**Twelfth Night/She's the Man**

William Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night* has been recently adapted into the 2006 film *She's the Man* starring Amanda Bynes. The film



follows her character Viola as she impersonates her twin brother at his new school. Viola, an avid soccer player, decides to play the sport at her brother's new school after her own team is cut and her brother runs away from home to become a musician. While at the school Viola must convince everyone that she is in fact her brother while keeping the secret from her parents and her crush at the new school. Eventually Viola's brother returns to the school just in time to make things slightly more confusing for everyone.

**The Scarlet Letter/Easy A**

The most recent teen film inspired by a classic novel is the 2010 title *Easy A*, which is based on *The Scarlet Letter* by



Nathaniel Hawthorne. The main character Olive, played by Emma Stone, becomes a popular figure in her high school after

helping a friend fake a relationship. The word is spread to other socially awkward teens in the school, who ask Olive to help them become accepted. An uptight classmate starts to spread rumours about Olive's fake encounters with boys in their school which in turn starts a scandal.

Olive embraces the attention and sews a scarlet 'A' on her clothing to publicize her objectionable status. She finally comes clean and tells the entire story to those in her town that were so quick to make snap judgments about her.

Film adaptations are a great way of introducing young adults to classic novels which are not often read anymore outside of schools. Also, many teens may not even know that some of their favourite teen movies were originally classic novels or plays. There will never be a replacement for the original version, but some of these stories adapted for the box office may attract a different or even larger audience than the

story in its original format. A timeless story will remain a timeless story; fun teen versions will only help to attract reluctant teen readers to the original stories.