



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 16, 2010

## Eat Pray Love Fails to Entertain

Directed by Ryan Murphy, *Eat Pray Love* is a movie adaptation of the New York Times bestseller *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India, and Indonesia*, written by Elizabeth Gilbert. Based on Gilbert's real-life experiences, the memoir focuses on Gilbert's struggles with her divorce, from which she attained closure through her journeys across the world. Unfortunately, both the novel and the film appeal to a very specific audience, leaving all others in a coma-like state throughout the reading/viewing experience.



Elizabeth Gilbert (Julia Roberts) seemingly had an ideal life, with everything from a successful career to a beautiful home and loving husband. It is not until she and her husband try to conceive a child, however, that Gilbert recognizes a void in her life, one that cannot be filled by a husband and child. She must confront the truth that she chose to conform to societal expectations at a young age, rather than pursuing the life that she really wanted, full of adventure and exploration.

In a decision that appeared to happen relatively quickly and without proper deliberation, Gilbert divorces her husband (Billy Crudup) and launches into a stigmatized relationship with a significantly younger man (James Franco), which ultimately mirrors the same relationship she ended with her husband.

Realizing that she continuously attempts to attain happiness through her romantic relationships, Gilbert decides that she needs to take responsibility for her own bliss. She elects to journey across the world from Italy, to India, and finally to Bali, in order to rediscover herself. Throughout that year-long journey, Gilbert does exactly as the novel says: eats, prays, and loves.

Much of Gilbert's journey is gluttonous and overindulgent, specifically when it comes to food. However, she is willing to accept her weight-gain as it represents her unwillingness to sacrifice her passions, in this case, for food, in order to adhere to social standards, like maintaining a perfect figure. On this journey, Gilbert puts herself and her happiness at the forefront of her life.

Both the novel and the film deal with very profound themes, including how to cope with regret, and the importance of forgiveness and developing a close relationship with God. In the last instance, Gilbert seeks that relationship through meditation with a Hindu guru, rather than through Church and the Bible, a disappointing choice, but one that carries Gilbert to her much-needed transformation, though it's never quite clear how.

Along the way, Gilbert encounters wonderfully endearing new friends, many with similarly painful backgrounds, but all of whom provide a necessary support system.

Gilbert's experiences would provoke longing from any audience member, particularly her exploits in Italy and Bali, characterized by great food, fine wine, and special friends. I felt like I gained five pounds just watching as Roberts consumed pasta dish after pasta dish, prosciutto wrapped melon, and rich



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Italian pastries, but that did not stop me from coming home and making a plate of movie-inspired spaghetti.

*Eat Pray Love* also possesses aesthetic quality. The scenery throughout the film is utterly breathtaking, with the exception of the poverty-stricken streets of Calutta, India. The ruins of Rome and the ocean views in Bali will likely have moviegoers contacting their travel agents to plan their next vacation.

Unfortunately, despite the merits of *Eat Pray Love*, much of the two-and-a-half-hour film is comprised of quiet, meditative, and to be blunt, boring scenes.

To boot, attempts at gaiety at times appeared to be highly forced, and utterly silly, particularly when Gilbert and her Swedish friend (Tuva Novotny) parade through the streets of Naples like giggly schoolgirls.

The romance Gilbert discovers in Bali is devoid of passion, and ultimately seems to undo all that Gilbert worked to achieve in the year's journey. Her "beef" with all of her previous relationships was her inability to work towards her own happiness while trying to maintain the happiness of her significant others. That issue does not seem to disappear with her Bali romance, but is somehow forgiven, providing what I believe to be an anti-climactic conclusion.

Julia Roberts does not disappoint in her rendition of Liz Gilbert, though the role does not demand much more from the actress than wide, natural smiles, or teary-eyed frowns. Most disappointing, however, was James Franco's portrayal of Gilbert's young beau. Franco was lifeless, unconvincing, and dry as toast. His performance rivals that of Robert Pattinson in his depiction of *Twilight's* Edward Cullen, a highly unflattering comparison.

Overall, *Eat Pray Love* does not possess enough character to appeal to a wide array of moviegoers. Those who find themselves in similar predicaments to Elizabeth Gilbert's will perhaps take solace in knowing that they are not alone, but most others will find the film to be unrealistic, predictable and unentertaining.



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