



Movie Review: Flight

Flight is a powerfully redemptive film that highlights the disastrous effects that substance abuse can have on one's life. Denzel Washington aptly portrays a man who has apparently hit rock-bottom until things take a dramatic turn for the worse, proving that man's fall into depravity is a hard and dramatic one without bounds. *Flight* proves to be an exciting movie with masterful direction and action — possibly be one of this year's best.



Whip Whittaker (Denzel Washington) is a man who has made some poor decisions in his life. He is an anxious alcoholic who amplifies his drunkenness with drugs. What's worse is that he regularly puts the lives of others at risk in the process of his own self-destruction by flying passenger aircraft under the influence of these substances. Additionally, his lover is a flight attendant named Katerina Marquez (Nadine Velazquez) who is on his flights and is therefore in danger as well, not that Whittaker seems to notice.

Whittaker has risked flying while under the influence a number of times and has acquired a false sense of security in his ability to operate an aircraft under the influence of some pretty heavy stuff.

However, something happens that shakes Whittaker's sense of self and security, but not in the way one might expect.

The flight that this film portrays is a fateful one. Approximately half an hour after take-off through some rather rough turbulence, every pilot's wildest fears befall Whittaker. A dreadful noise is heard that awakens him from his inebriated slumber and in an instant, the plane drops 10,000 feet. The engines explode, and parts of the plane begin to break off.

Whittaker's co-pilot takes to prayer while passengers scream in fear. In fact the entire plane collapses into chaos and confusion and utter fear, with just one exception: Whittaker.

Despite his inebriated state, he manages to maintain complete control of his senses, and of the aircraft. He puts all his experience and training to excellent use as he slows the plane's plummet, stabilizes it, and manages to land it, however tumultuously, in a field next to a church in Atlanta, Georgia. Finally, when the plane and passengers are safe, Whittaker succumbs to his fears and passes out.

Whittaker awakens in a hospital room, where he learns that just six of the 102 passengers perished in the flight, a figure that could have been significantly worse had it not been for his composed handling of the ordeal.

One would expect Whittaker to be hailed a hero for his efforts, but there's just one small problem. While he was unconscious, a toxicology test was taken, revealing that he was under the influence of alcohol and drugs while operating that fateful flight.

Regardless of Whittaker's heroics, the toxicology test proves he is also a criminal who will have to answer for flying a plane under the influence of drugs and alcohol.



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So rather than a parade in honor of a pilot who successfully landed a plane in a critical situation, jail time awaits Whittaker.

Whittaker's union rep (Bruce Greenwood) and lawyer (Don Cheadle) want to help him avoid prison. After all, this situation is tricky. Though Whittaker placed the lives of countless people at risk by taking to the air under the influence, it was his quick thinking and composure in a rocky situation that was not of his doing that saved a number of lives. So should he go to prison?

But more importantly, the question is, will this prove to be the moment of no return for Whittaker?

Flight is a wonderfully complex film showcasing a powerful dichotomy between the calm, calculated man at the controls of the plane in peril and the one who has seemingly lost all control of his own life.

In fact, *Flight* seems to be about two near-crashes, the first being the actual flight that Whittaker managed to land. But the second near-crash is truly the prime subject of the film: Whittaker's life.

Whittaker will most certainly have to answer for his poor life choices, both legally and emotionally.

He has lost a number of valuable things in his life because of his decisions. But being caught might be exactly what he needed. He has spent too much of his life lying, hiding, and denying, and he himself is fed up with it.

While in the hospital after the flight, Whittaker befriends a woman named Nicole (Kelly Reilly) who shares a number of his problems. She is an actress in pornographic films who is hooked on heroin. Her addiction is so strong that she is driven to prostitution to make money to buy her drugs. And while she is in no position to be of any assistance to Whittaker, the two wish to help one another.

And despite the terrible circumstances in which it is provoked, Whittaker's redemption is unfolding — one that may help him salvage some of the more important things he has lost, such as his relationship with his son.

Naturally, a film such as this one has some spiritual undertones. Many attribute Whittaker's miraculous landing to divine intervention, and God is often invoked in conversations about fate and sin. And those who use God to explain life's difficulties do so quite positively.

But Whittaker, who has seemingly fallen so far from God's grace, is unable to accept that explanation. It is clear that he is grappling with his own faith and spirituality. In fact, he openly mocks the faith of one of his flight attendants, who ignores his jests and instead invites him to join her at church. However, there are moments when it is clear that he has not fully rejected God. And as Whittaker moves through his transformation, his relationship with God and his trust and understanding of Him seems to strengthen.

Despite significant Christian undertones in the film, however, it is not fit for young audiences, given much of its content. It focuses on a man who abuses drugs and alcohol, and engages in premarital relations, in some cases, with someone who has prostituted herself for drugs and money. The foul language, sexuality, and drug use in the film which at times showcase the drama, unfortunately make it unfit for younger audiences.

Denzel Washington gives his usual compelling performance, winning over audiences despite his selfishness. And his ability to portray a wide range of emotions is very clear in his depiction of Whip Whittaker.

Flight has a relatively predictable conclusion, though I highly doubt most moviegoers would begrudge



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it. The movie is exciting throughout and will likely have moviegoers captivated from start to finish.



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