



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 21, 2010

Nanny McPhee Returns a Magical Adventure

Though she has been dubbed the anti-Mary Poppins, Nanny McPhee is essentially a repackaged version of Mary Poppins, minus the lovely beauty of Julie Andrews and a spoonful of sugar, and with the addition of a snaggletooth, enormous nose, and magical walking stick. This does not distract from the charms and adventures of the Nanny McPhee films, however. Directed by Susanna White, *Nanny McPhee Returns* tells a slightly different tale from the original 2005 *Nanny McPhee* movie, but manages to attain the same hearty comedy, morality, and special effects that made the first film a success.



In a 1940s setting, a century later than the first *Nanny McPhee* film, we encounter a frazzled young mother named Isabel Green (Maggie Gyllenhaal) who is struggling to raise her three unruly children, Vincent (Oscar Steer), Megsie (Lil Woods), and Norman (Asa Butterfield), and run the family farm while her husband is at war. Isabel also must combat the efforts of her shady brother-in-law (Rhys Ifans), whose interest in the family farm is to sell it under Isabel's nose to help pay off his gambling debts. Unfortunately, Isabel's difficulties are increased tenfold when the farm is visited by two spoiled cousins, Cyril (Eros Vlahos) and Celia (Rosie Taylor-Ritson).

To Cyril and Celia, taking up residence on a muddy farm is a far cry from the refined living with which they are acquainted in London. Both the cousins and the Green children quickly feel as though their comfort zones have been infringed upon and as such, never second guess a raucous collision with one another.

Nothing short of a lot of patience and a little bit of magic can salvage the destruction created by this difficult living situation.

Enter Nanny McPhee. With her five laws of cooperation, which involve the basic tenants of sharing, cleaning, and loving, and just a bit of magic from her special stick, the children transform into cooperative, well-behaved darlings. Nanny McPhee turns out to be just what the doctor ordered.

Nanny McPhee's disciplinary measures are unconventional, but whimsical nonetheless. Naughty behavior does not hold a candle to the magic of the walking stick, but it sure is a lot of fun watching the children try to beat it. Part of the magic, too, is that the movie appeals to all audiences, both old and young.

The strongest element of the *Nanny McPhee* films is McPhee's relationships to the families she assists. Great acting is a close second. Emma Thompson and Maggie Gyllenhall are their usual charming selves. Likewise, the parade of hearty British guest actors is a welcomed presence onscreen. All of the children manage to behave hellishly while maintaining a level of charm that continues to make viewers interested in their story rather than wishing them away.



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Additionally, *Nanny McPhee Returns* employs stunning visuals, including a performance by some adorable piglets and an anxiety-provoking trip to London.

In other words, *Nanny McPhee Returns* has it all. It is a worthwhile way to spend an afternoon.



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