

First Rate

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Like most Star Wars fans, I couldn't wait to see 'Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith.' Not only was it the final chapter in the story's saga it was also the first Star Wars movie to receive a PG-13 rating.

In the previous 5 Star Wars films, all rated PG, hands and arms were lopped off by lightsabers and Darth Maul was even bisected by one. 'Revenge of the Sith,' however, received a PG-13 rating after Anakin Skywalker fell on the bank of a lava river and started on fire. As much as my son loves Star Wars, I was very glad he didn't see that flame-broiled whopper.

Thankfully parents have this movie rating system to help determine which films are appropriate for their children's viewing. The ratings are established by the Classification and Ratings Board, which was created for parents in 1968 by the Motion Picture Association of America, the National Association of Theatre Owners, NATO and IFIDA.

The full-time Board, located in Los Angeles, is comprised of 10 to 13 members who must be parents, be possessed of an intelligent maturity, and have the ability to view a film and apply a rating that most parents would find suitable.

The movie ratings are: 'G' for General Audiences, where all ages are admitted; 'PG', where all ages are admitted but parental guidance is suggested; 'PG-13', where no children under 13 are permitted without an accompanying parent or guardian; 'R' for Restricted, where children under 17 are not admitted without accompaniment; and 'NC-17', where no children under 17 are permitted.

G-rated motion pictures contain no adult language, nudity, sex, violence or other matters that are deemed inappropriate for children. Movies rated PG may contain some material unsuitable for children, such as some profanity and some depictions of violence or brief nudity, but never drug use.

PG-13 rated motion pictures may have more violence, nudity, sensuality, language, adult activities or other elements than PG movies, such as brief nudity, but such nudity typically will not be sexually oriented. Violence is allowed in a PG-13 film, but generally not both realistic and extreme or persistent violence.

Movies containing some adult material receive an R rating. These films may include adult themes, adult activity, hard language, intense or persistent violence, sexually-oriented nudity or drug abuse. Parents are advised to take this rating very seriously.

The Board confers an NC-17 rating to movies it feels are only appropriate only for an adult audience. An NC-17 rating can be based on violence, sex, aberrational behavior, drug abuse or any other element that most parents would consider too strong and therefore off-limits for viewing by their children.

Submission of a film to the Board is completely voluntary, however, almost all producers or distributors do so. Movies can be released without a rating or with a self-appointed rating, however, the G, PG, PG-13, R, and, NC-17 ratings are federally registered certification marks of the MPAA and may not be used.

If they disagree with a rating, filmmakers can appeal the decision to the Rating Appeals Board, which is comprised of 14 to 18 members who are from the industry organizations that govern the rating system. Otherwise, filmmakers can edit their films and resubmit them for a new rating.

My son is counting down the 11 years he has to wait to see 'Revenge of the Sith.'