

# Zootopia (2016)

Rated PG. Running time: 1 hour 48 min.

Our content ratings: Violence 2; Language 0; Sex/Nudity 1.

Our star rating (1-5): 5

*The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down  
with the kid,*

*the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little  
child shall lead them.*

*Isaiah 11:6*

Filled with laughter-inducing sight gags, the setting of this fable is one in which the Hebrew prophet's vision has become partially realized. Zootopia is a city in which animals who are predators live and work alongside those that are prey. The city is divided into sectors, the larger animals living in Tundra Town and Sahara Square, both of them sharing a rain forest area, adjacent to a miniature city whose citizens are the size of mice.

The film begins a long way from the city in Bunny Burrows where little Judy Hopps (voiced by Ginnifer) is part of a school play in which we learn the history of Zootopia. Judy's parents see her growing up and working on their carrot farm, but the little bunny has bigger dreams—she wants to grow up and become a police officer, a dream that everyone else regards as impossible.

Jump to 15 years later when Judy grows up and decides to follow her dream. (Her train trip through the countryside and through various cities is beautifully depicted.) She manages to enroll in and graduate from the police academy, but the head of Zootopia's police force Bogo (Idris Elba), a gruff

cape buffalo, is less than thrilled at his smallest new recruit. Assigned to monitor parking meters, she feels humiliated by being designated a "meter maid." Still, she goes about her duties so zealously that she wracks up 200 parking tickets on her first day. But she would rather be searching for the missing animals for which the other cops are searching.

Managing to gain the reluctant Chief's permission to search for a missing otter, she scurries off to meet her 48-hour deadline. She hooks up with a street hustler the crafty fox Nick Wilde (Jason Bateman). Who earlier had hoodwinked her in a scheme. There follows a delightful series of events that include city hall shenanigans of the Mayor, a lion (J K Simmons) and his assistant, plus a crazy riff on the *Godfather*. The latter scene involves The Godfather at his daughter's wedding, the goons being huge polar bears and the Godfather and family being tiny shrews! Possibly the most laugh-inducing sequence is that in which Nick and Judy seek information from a contact at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles staffed by sloths, their contact working and speaking in VERY slow motion.

Unlike most Disney films, this one touches on relevant social issues such as prejudice and racial profiling, as well as the general theme of perseverance in the face of those who would pour cold water on our dreams. The highest praise I can offer is that this is a film equal to those from Pixar, the studio acquired by Disney. The three directors Byron Howard (*Tangled*, *Bolt*), Rich Moore (*Wreck-It Ralph*), and Jared Bush, the latter sharing screenplay credit with Phil Johnston, gift us with a delightful tale that people of faith can appreciate and use to explore with children important values and issues. The notion that the social harmony, envisioned by the ancient prophets, can be broken up when we revert to savage instincts and treat each other unjustly is but one issue that the film offers us the opportunity to reflect upon and discuss. As always with

animated films, this one is too good to leave just to children.

*This review with a set of discussion questions will be in the May issue of VP.*