

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

Four Modern Film Interpretations of the Classic Novel

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First printed in the 1678, *Pilgrim's Progress* is regarded as one of the best-loved, most-read, and most significant works of religious English literature. It has sold more than 250 million copies, been translated into over 200 languages, and has never been out of print.

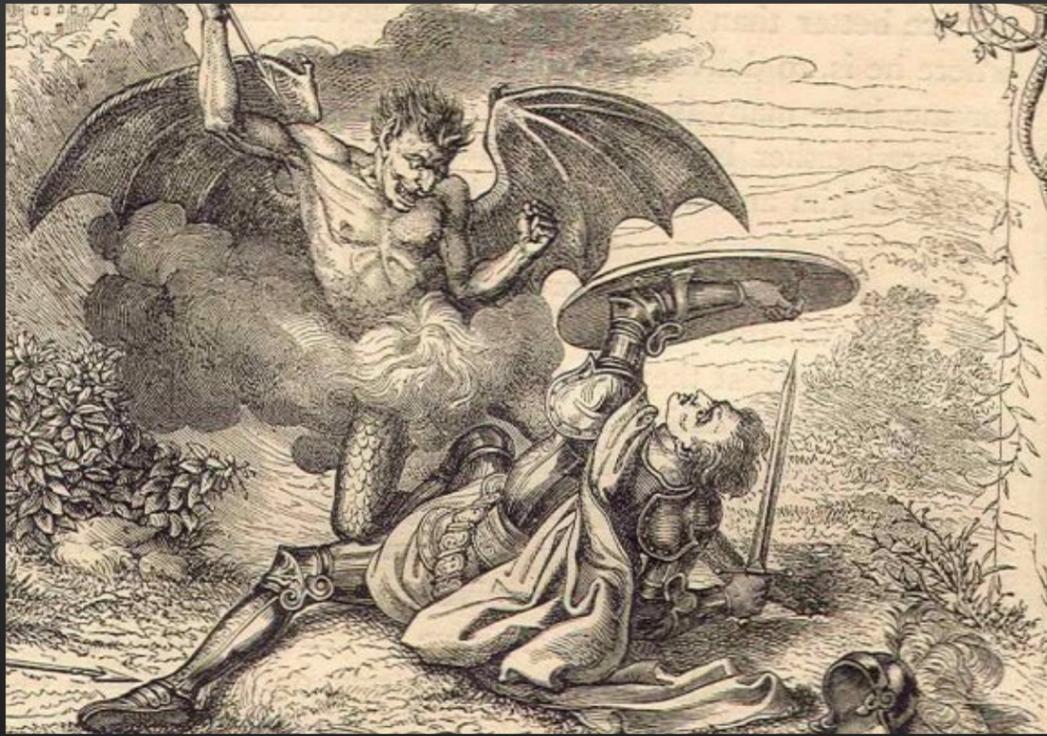
It is the allegorical tale of an everyman, Christian, seeking salvation from the trappings of his current life and the inevitable destruction of his city, who sets out on a pilgrimage to find spiritual freedom in "the Celestial City." Along the treacherous path, Christian encounters many obstacles that test his courage, devotion, and faith as well as characters that prove useful in showing him the difference between right and wrong (the straight and narrow path). After Christian arrives and attains his heavenly reward, his wife and sons complete the pilgrimage as well to join him in eternal paradise.

At least, that's how it went back in 1678...

The following document is a quick overview of **four** distinct and wildly different interpretations of *Pilgrim's Progress*.

By focussing on different themes of the book - courage, physical strength, spiritual warfare, the power of religion, destiny and birthright, etc - the resulting interpretations becomes altogether new and unique stories in varying genres while still holding true to the core experience and narrative of Christian's original pilgrimage.





TITLE: PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

GENRE: Fantasy / Action / Adventure

TONE: The magical "knights and dragons" world of LORD OF THE RINGS meets the epic battle of CLASH OF THE TITANS with a cast of characters in the vein of GAME OF THRONES.

LOGLINE: Plagued by visions depicting the destruction of his city, a orphan peasant sets off on a quest to find the Royal City in hopes of acquiring the protection of the King for himself and his village; but when he strays from the road and deviates into a rival monarch's domain, he must learn to arm himself and fight if he is to defeat the mutant King of the Locusts and his demonic legions, save his own people, and stake claim to his immortal birthright.

THEMES: Faith. Destiny.

INTERPRETATION OF THE NOVEL: Of all the possible interpretations of the novel *Pilgrim's Progress* presented in this document, this is the most faithful in that it maintains the original storyline of Christian and his physical quest to find the Celestial City. By omitting many of the novel's theological discussions between Christian and the fellow travelers he meets along the way, the spiritual aspects and overtly Christian themes are minimized allowing room to maximize the action/adventure elements of the story: Christian's narrow escape from the fiery destruction of his village (The City of Destruction), his treacherous decent into the "Valley of the Shadow of Death" where he fights one of the most referenced monsters in English literature, Apollyon, (the King of Locusts) at "the mouth of hell", and the deadly confrontation between Christian and the Giant named Despair where our hero is beaten and further imprisoned (just to name a few). This approach to *Pilgrim's Progress* increases the potential for visual spectacle and transforms it from a conversational journey through Christianity into a knight's epic adventure.









TITLE: PILGRIM | **ALTERNATE TITLE:** BLACKTOP

GENRE: Post-apocalyptic Western

TONE: The post-apocalyptic wasteland hero of I AM LEGEND or Stephen King's *The Gunslinger* meets the steampunk tech of MAD MAX.

LOGLINE: On the verge of human extinction, a "man with no name" sets out across the desert to find a mythical city depicted in the tales told to him by his dying grandfather; but when he is ambushed on the road and abducted by a group of rogue survivors, he must learn to wield the power contained in the legends if he is to earn the trust of his kidnappers and help them defeat the post-apocalyptic mutants who live "off the drag."

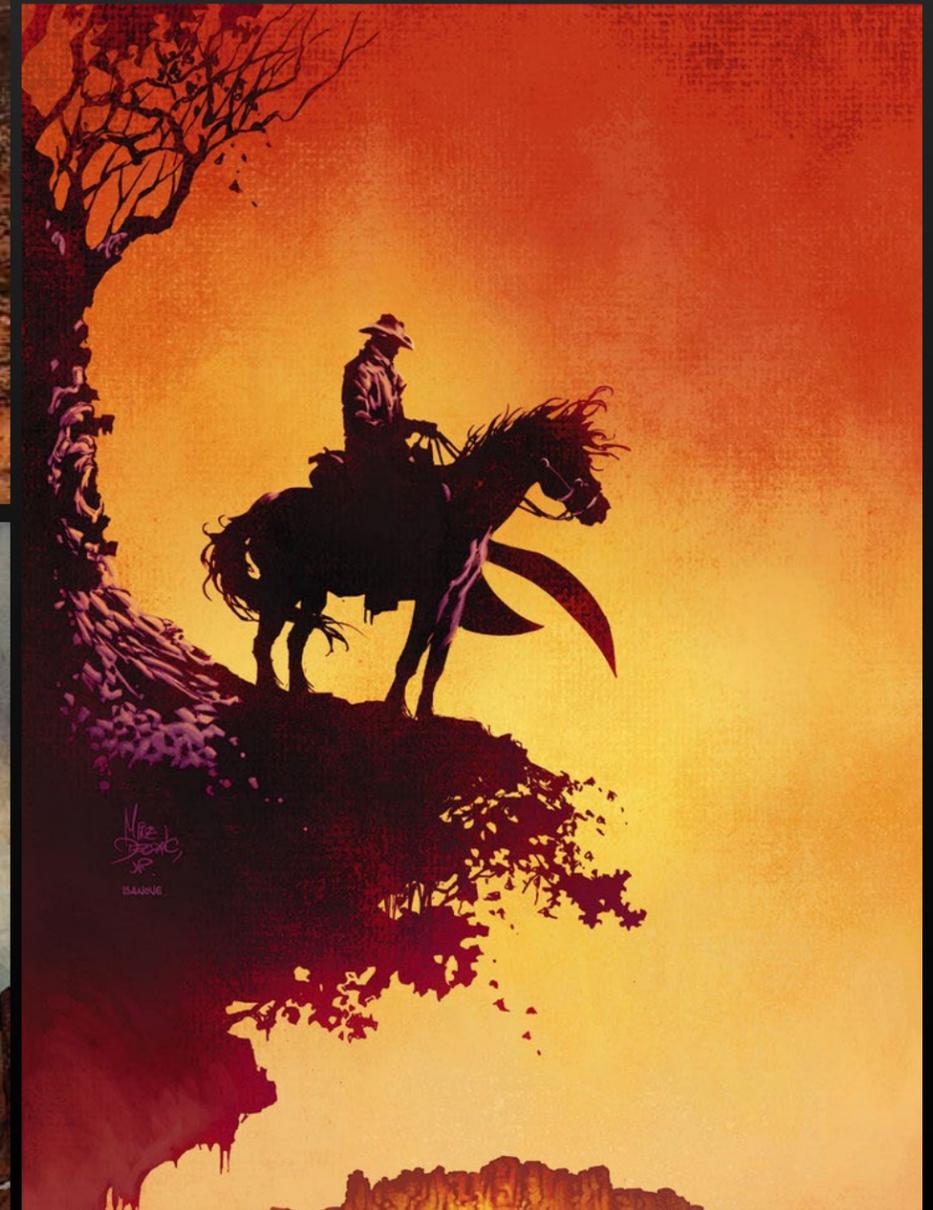
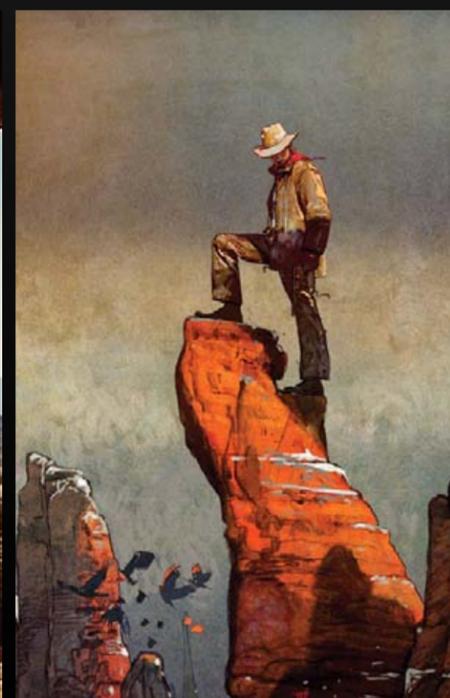
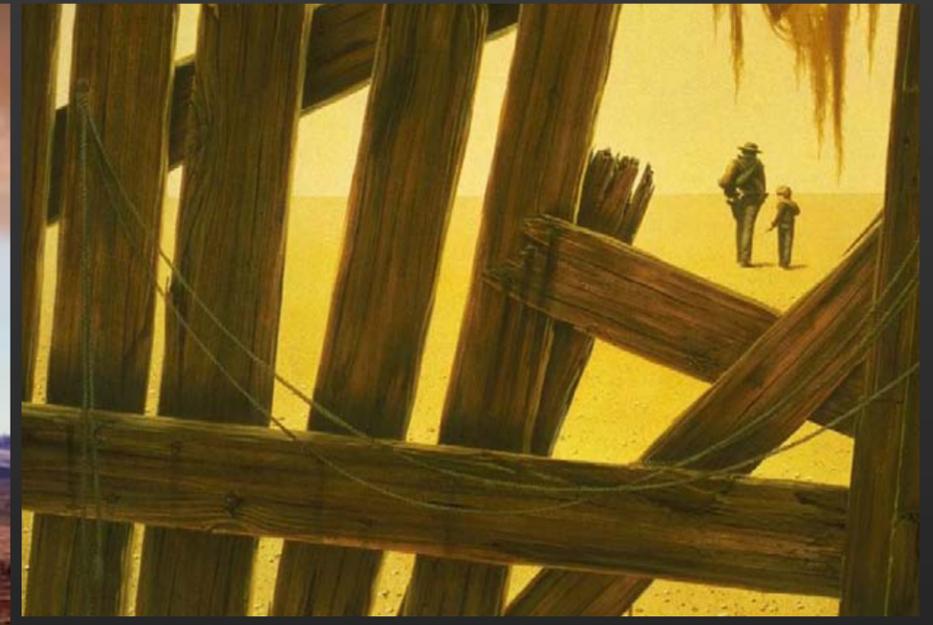
THEMES: Fear. Power. Science/Religion/Myth/Magic.

INTERPRETATION OF THE NOVEL: This interpretation of the book *Pilgrim's Progress* eliminates 21st century technology, thereby reestablishes a world where a general lack of scientific understanding fosters a need for mythology and religion. By establishing a world where the current social infrastructures have been removed, we open up the possibility of creating new customs, new fashions, new methods of naming, new manners of identification, etc. For example, in our post-apocalyptic world, the idea of proper naming conventions such as John, Bill, or Matthew, has been forgotten with the destruction of civilization and replaced with a naming scheme similar to the one developed by Bunyan in *Pilgrim's Progress*, where individuals are identified by their characteristics, such as Hopeful, Truth, or Worldly Wiseman. Also lost is the understanding of modern science. Because of this, the residents of this forgotten world rely on their own senses to explain what they experience. The unexplainable becomes myth, science becomes magic, and from those the formation of a new religion. By creating a "new religion" we can avoid the singular religion of *Pilgrim's Progress* (Christianity), but still utilize the global concept of religion in the story. It is everyone's religion and no one's at the same time.









TITLE: LIMBO

GENRE: Supernatural Action / Adventure

TONE: The twisted, "through the looking glass" reality of THE MATRIX combined with the supernatural "angels and demons" warfare of CONSTANTINE.

LOGLINE: Wounded in an unprovoked act of violence and on the verge of death, a faithless ex-pastor slips into a coma only to wake up in Limbo where he is pursued by agents of both this world and the next; but when sides are drawn and his purgatory begins to crumble, he must learn that the right road is not always the easiest road if he is to defeat Death and secure his place in eternity.

THEMES: Faith. The After-life. Spiritual warfare.

INTERPRETATION OF THE NOVEL: This interpretation of the book *Pilgrim's Progress* faithfully embraces the spiritual aspects of the original text by placing the story into the supernatural spectrum, but remains grounded by establishing that "Limbo" is an exact replica of the world as we remember it at the moment of our "death." For example, if our main character ("Chris") dies from a gun shot in New York's East Village, when he wakes up on the flip-side, he will still be in the East Village. The only difference is that the Limbo East Village is a crumbling ghost-town - empty of pedestrians or normal traffic. And while there are others who Chris will meet in this world, they are specific to Limbo and his personal journey toward his destination in the afterlife. By taking the journey out of the physical world and placing it into a foreign (but the same) alternate spiritual world we allow ourselves the freedom to explore many of the metaphysical ideas in *Pilgrim's Progress* while still remaining grounded to our reality with a very real character in a physically real place. This is Alice tumbling down the rabbit hole into Wonderland, Dorothy being whisked away to Oz, or Neo waking up from the Matrix in the alien landscape of the "real world."









TITLE: ON THE PATH TO FREEDOM

GENRE: Historical Action / Thriller

TOPE: The historical Civil War setting of *GLORY* meets the high-speed action of *THE FUGITIVE* with the Southern folklore flare of *O BROTHER WHERE ART THOU*.

LOGLINE: When his wife and sons are beaten, an illiterate southern slave risks his life to locate the hidden routes and safe houses of the Underground Railroad; but when sending word for his family compromises the the secrecy of the resistance, he must learn to rely on the traditional wisdom of the local folklore and negro-spirituals to "stay on the path", outsmart the federal "slave catchers", and lead his family to freedom.

THEMES: Courage. Faith. Conviction.

INTERPRETATION OF THE NOVEL: This interpretation of the book *Pilgrim's Progress* uses the Underground Railroad and the plight of the escaped slave as a metaphor for the path Christian takes to spiritual freedom.

During the Civil War, abolitionists who were attempting to teach illiterate slaves the secret routes of the Underground Railroad, gave them new lyrics to an old negro spiritual "Follow the Risen Lord" (which also happens to be Christian's creed), changing the words to "Follow the Drinking Gourd" - a coded representation of the Big Dipper constellation that points directly to the North Star (as in "Follow the North Star"). In addition, the song's verses contained coded geographical directions to safe houses where slaves could find continuing transportation into free Canada.

This retelling of *Pilgrim's Progress* substitutes physical Civil War-era slavery for the spiritual trappings of the "City of Destruction", the treacherous route of the Underground Railroad for Christian's hazardous spiritual path, and physical freedom for the spiritual freedom of the "Celestial City". In addition, the allies and villains Christian meets along his path in *Pilgrim's Progress* (Hopeful, Faithful, Helpful, Despair, Hypocrisy, etc) are all represented by characters present in the world of the Underground Railroad:

allies such as the evangelists who preach hope, white abolitionists faithful to the cause, "conductors" who help guide escaped slaves along the path; and villains such as slave masters reenforcing hypocrisy and ignorance, and the dreaded "slave catchers" who leave despair in their wake.

In addition, we are able to hold onto the idea of religion and spirituality because those same ideals were prevalent in the lives of southern slaves. A great deal of the slaves' knowledge of the world around them relied heavily on the oral literature of religion and traditional folklore. It would not be surprising to have a slave believe that "bad things" were happening to him/her because he/she had "disobeyed God" or "good things" were happening because he/she "stayed on the path of righteousness."





