

Long-awaited sequel more wicked than good

by Jacqueline Stoner

“Are people born wicked? Or do they have wickedness thrust upon them?” This is the age-old question, and one the widely popular *Wicked* movie and its recent sequel *Wicked: For Good* attempt to answer. Through exploring the perspectives of the Wicked Witch of the West and the Good Witch of the South originally introduced in the book *The Wizard of Oz*, this two-part series explores the circumstances that might sway an individual towards good or evil. With its recent record-breaking debut on November

21st, earning \$150 million at the domestic box office and \$226 million worldwide according to *CNN*, *Wicked: For Good* proves this question is still on the minds of many today. However, *Wicked: For Good*’s success does not necessarily reflect the quality of its content. In fact, I found the movie to be full of concerning scenes and messages that set a poor example for the younger audiences it is marketed towards. One of the most glaring problems I have with *Wicked: For Good* is its plot. For most

of the movie, time seems to tick by at a snail’s pace. Though Elphaba is supposed to be fighting corruption as the Wicked Witch of the West, she appears to have no real plan besides finding validation from others about her worth. It is tough to watch as she lets her sister Nessarose, as well as Glinda, the wizard, and Madame Morrible, use and manipulate her over and over again all while the plight of the animals in Oz is more or less forgotten. I get how hard it can be to be rejected and misunderstood, but is continuing to chase approval from others really the appropriate solution to be promoting?

Speaking of the characters in *Wicked: For Good*, I found it hard to discern who I was actually supposed to be rooting for. Elphaba, as discussed above, seems focused on finding acceptance for herself, and Glinda refuses to do anything that could jepordize her comfortable lifestyle. In pursuit of these selfish desires, both girls often choose to lie, manipulate other characters, and even physically harm innocent people in order to get their way. This behavior made both of them seem far more like villains than heroes to me. Unfortunately, *Wicked: For Good* does no better when it comes to relationships. I honestly have no idea how Elphaba and Glinda consider themselves to be friends because their relationship seems incredibly toxic. Both girls clearly care more about achieving their personal goals than each other, and they can often be found either fighting or using each other to get their own way.

Even worse, the movie also features more than one abusive dating relationship, which I am not sure is appropriate for its PG rating. Regardless, instead of addressing these relationships, the film seems more as if it is trying to sweep them under the rug. Uninvolved characters fail to see the relationships as wrong, and some even go so far as to help the perpetrators continue their abuse. Clearly, these are in no way, shape, or form the kind of relationships we should be normalizing for young viewers. Lastly, I was disappointed by the way *Wicked: For Good* attempts to answer the problem of evil. Though I do believe individuals can be driven to be “wicked” by factors beyond their control, it feels as if the movie uses this to justify characters’ harmful actions. “Wickedness is a social construct,” it seems to say, “so following your heart is all that matters.” However, as Catholics, we know this is not true. Being “wicked” is a choice brought about by continually rejecting God and His plan of goodness for our lives and the lives of those around us. Choosing to commit evil actions is wrong and inexcusable no matter what the circumstances leading up to them may be. Contrary to popular opinion, our hearts also make terrible guides, which is why God gave us the Bible, the Church, and the opportunity to have a personal relationship with Him as resources instead.

So, despite what *Wicked: For Good* portrays, the answer to the age-old question seems to be neither. No one is born wicked nor forced to be so, only tempted by Satan and given the choice whether to acquiesce. As Catholics, it is our job to continually resist so that one day in Heaven, we can at last join Dorothy in saying, “There’s no place like home.”



Screenrat.com

Elphaba and Glinda listen as the wizard attempts to convert Elphaba to his side while at his castle in the Emerald City. The unlikely pair became friends after they were forced to share a room at Shiz University in the first *Wicked* movie.

Christmas cookie conundrum

by Isabella Chasteen

It is Christmas Eve, the warm, sweet smell of cookies is wafting throughout the house, The Grinch is playing on the TV, and your cat is scaling the tree, again. The oven dings and the cookies are done, but as you are so excited to dig in, you realize what kind they are... Christmas, while a time of giving and being with those you love, is a holiday known for its desserts. Without treats, what would Christmas be? The true dilemma of this holiday is what flavor should be made. What is the best Christmas cookie? This year, I decided to run an experiment. I gathered a list of the eight most popular Christmas cookie flavors in the United States, prepared them, and rated each. My list, in no particular order, consisted of sugar, gingerbread, snickerdoodle, peppermint, shortbread, lemon melting moments, chocolate chip, and snowball. When selecting each recipe, I chose the most popular or familiar ones. Each flavor was ranked on its preparation, taste, and contribution to the Christmas spirit. The first tier of being considered the best Christmas cookie is ease of preparation. Can I make these cookies in a pinch? Unfortunately, many of the cookies had lengthy preparations, specifically the outrageous chill times. Four hours is far too much time to wait for cookies, especially when they still are not done after all the waiting!

Cookies are usually not too complicated, but waiting around for them to sit in the fridge is an irritating process. Cutting out the chill time is always an option, but doing so means sacrificing the fluffiness and perfect shape of the cookie! In this tier, the winners were peppermint, chocolate chip, and snickerdoodle, the simplest recipes. The next tier is taste. I am not entirely a cookie person, but I enjoyed most of these. My one gripe, however, would be the shortbread cookies. To me, expecting a sweet treat and then biting into the equivalent of an extremely dry mini biscuit is not pleasant. For this tier, my top choices were sugar, peppermint, lemon melting moments, and chocolate chip. Now for the last, most important tier of this challenge: contribution to the Christmas spirit. I narrowed the list to the four above, but what is the ultimate Christmas cookie? First up, the chocolate chip cookie. While this cookie is my personal favorite, it is not Christmas enough to be the ultimate cookie; therefore, it was eliminated. Next up, the lemon melting moments. Another classic, but for me, they are simply not Christmas enough. They were still delicious, and I still recommend trying them. The last two contestants in this challenge were the classic sugar and peppermint. When

I think of Christmas, these two things come to mind: sugar cookies and candy canes. While I do still enjoy sugar cookies, they simply are not as exciting or unique as the peppermint ones. My final word must be crowning the peppermint cookies as the best Christmas cookie. The recipe I used can be found on the website *Our Best Bites* as “Peppermint Sugar

Cookies.” They are quick to make, tasty, and promote the Christmas spirit. I do not recommend making eight types of cookies in one day, but I do say branching out and trying new recipes is exciting. Expanding your tastes opens many doors and can make the holidays more interesting for everyone!



Isabella Chasteen / Rock Bottom Staff

Featured above is the cookie catastrophe of November 29th in senior Isabella Chasteen’s kitchen. These were six of the eight types of cookies prepared on this festive Saturday.

Christmas lights up controversy

by Lillian Miller

It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas / Lights on every house / There’s the one right off 33rd, you can’t even see the yard / From a blinding compilation of decor! The holidays are now in full swing; wreaths are hung downtown, classic Christmas tunes ring in the back of everyone’s mind, and houses are decorated with assortments of festive lights. Unfortunately, one of the most controversial topics during this joyful season is the use

of Christmas lights. People are either bothered by mismatched or crooked lights or say they add character. They claim anybody who goes all out is overwhelming, or they think the more, the better. Some prefer incandescent lights to create a warm, clean environment while others think white lights take all of the fun out and prefer color. In a survey conducted by the Scotus journalism staff, 273 students voiced their opinions on Christmas lights.

When it comes to the time of year people put up their lights, some are hung as soon as decorations hit the shelves in October. Certain families are excited to start the season, while others prefer to honor Halloween and Thanksgiving first. Scotus is split around Thanksgiving; 36.8% prefer sometime before Thanksgiving and 46% prefer sometime after Thanksgiving. Some don’t care as much what time of year but prefer nice weather to hang their lights; 13.6% put them up whenever Nebraska is blessed with a warm day. Students were also asked about preferred style or color, and results show a running theme of order. Eighth grader Matthew Fernandez is one of this majority. “They don’t look good if they aren’t straight or don’t match with other lights,” Fernandez said. “It makes the decoration look unorganized and messy.” Over half of Scotus agreed with Fernandez; 26.5% claim they don’t care as long as the style matches, 12.1% insist the color must match, and 11.4% say they must be hung straight. With this trend of order and “clean-looking” lights comes a popularity of white LED lights or warm white incandescents. Senior Carter Sucha voiced his opinion about this shift. “The white lights take all the fun out of Christmas,” Sucha said. “It should be colorful.” Seventh grader Ashley Klitz, on the other

hand, prefers matching styles but loves all Christmas lights. She enjoys the atmosphere they create. “I think Christmas lights are awesome,” Klitz said. “I like that they bring so much joy to people. They brighten up everything, even your mood.” No matter how the lights go up, they are there for all to enjoy and create memories with their loved ones. Ninth grader Evalett Sandoval loves all Christmas lights, regardless of the color or style. “I absolutely LOVE driving around at night to see all the Christmas lights with my family and friends!” Sandoval said. “It makes me feel jolly and really gets me into the Christmas spirit.” Christmas lights are about how every family celebrates their traditions and shows their festivity, not what other people think is best. Another student who appreciates lights mainly for the memorable drives with family and friends is senior Addi Beiermann. “I personally think [christmas lighting] makes the house look fancier and more put together,” Beiermann said. “It shows holiday spirit.” Conflicting opinions create tension and a judgmental atmosphere during this time of year oriented toward gratitude, joy, and Christmas spirit. Let us all put our opinions aside, celebrate, and be merry, lights and all.



Lillian Miller / Rock Bottom Staff

Christmas spirit is whole-heartedly reflected in the decor of this well-known house on 29th Street off of 33rd Avenue in Columbus. The glow from this densely decorated yard can be seen from many blocks away!