

# The Movie Shrek

Director: Andrew Adamson et al. (2001 – 90 mins.)

Starring: the voices of Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, John Lithgow

## 1. Summary

This animated tale is set in the land of Duloc, in whose woods lives an ogre named Shrek who is feared by all. The heartless ruler of Duloc, Lord Farquaad, banishes all fairytale people from his lands into Shrek's woods. The only way Shrek can get his land back – and some peace and quiet – is to go on a quest to find the beautiful princess Fiona and bring her back to be marry Lord Farquaad, who will then become king. Accompanied by an irritating donkey, Shrek sets out to bring back Fiona, only to discover when he finds her that she is not quite the typical fairytale princess.

## 2. Questions about the Movie

1. "There is a moment in *Shrek* when the despicable Lord Farquaad has the Gingerbread Man tortured by dipping him into milk. This prepares us for another moment when Princess Fiona's singing voice is so piercing it causes jolly little bluebirds to explode, making the best of a bad situation, she fries their eggs. This is not your average family cartoon. Shrek is jolly and wicked, filled with sly in-jokes and yet somehow possessing a heart." (Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 18, 2001) We tend to think of animated movies as something for children to watch, something we take them to or put on the DVD or video machine to keep them entertained. What makes *Shrek* an animated movie that works for adults in a different way than it works for children?
2. "But the technological innovations aren't what make this feisty movie entertainment so refreshing. Nor is it the story specifics themselves, which occasionally bobble and flag, particularly when Donkey is such an ass. Rather, Shrek lives happily ever after because it's such a feisty but good natured embrace of the inner ogre in everyone, and such an irreverent smackdown of the Establishment in all its "heigh ho" tyranny." (Lisa Schwarzbaum, *Entertainment Weekly*, May 16, 2001) What are some examples of the "inner ogre" in people around you, in people in the news, in yourself? What part of the establishment is *Shrek* going after with a "smackdown"?
3. "Funny, irreverent and moving, the unconventional *Shrek* may mock fairy tales, but in the process, creates its own. Without giving too much away, the picture questions notions of beauty, asking, just what is beautiful?" (Kim Morgan, *The Oregonian*, May 18, 2001) How does

the movie take conventional notions of the beautiful and turn them upside down? After seeing the movie, how would you answer the question "Just what is beautiful?"

### 3. The Relationship of the Movie to the Theme of the Exercise

1. Though Shrek is feared as something terrible, we see that he is a very lonely person. No one is allowed to come within his encircled property, and he has no friends. Perhaps this is his way of reinforcing the wall around his ego, of hiding from his vulnerability. How does Donkey break through all his defences? Why does Shrek allow Donkey to do that? What is the result?
2. The Exercise tells us that accepting our vulnerability will lead to humility, and that this will lead to community. Using examples from a number of scenes, trace Shrek's progress from his lack of true self-knowledge to his acceptance of his vulnerability. What community results from this for Shrek?
3. Here is a list of some of the ways that the divine love that the Exercises of the Second Week have called us to enter the world. What are the parallels to Shrek's quest for human love?
  - love enters in a vulnerable way and grows to be mature and responsible
  - love builds relationships and trusts
  - love challenges the forces of disorder in the world

### 4. The Relationship of the Movie to One's Self in the Exercise

1. What are the "riches, honour and pride" that Shrek has put together for himself before he is forced to leave his home? How similar are these to your own pattern of "riches, honour and pride"? How does Shrek deal with them? How do you plan to deal with yours?
2. Shrek is a very vulnerable creature – partly because of what he is (an ogre) and partly because of the way he has come to see himself. He has to learn to accept this and deal with it (consider his reaction to what he overhears between the princess and the donkey late one night towards the end of the journey). The humility he comes to is hard won. What in your life makes you vulnerable? What allows you to accept this vulnerability? What happens when you do accept it?
3. On his journey, Shrek takes time to reflect on himself in many different ways. The journey becomes for him a voyage of self-discovery. This Exercise is an overview of the Second Week – a voyage of discovery for you. Looking back on this week – and on what you have written in your journal – what has been the most significant thing that you have discovered about yourself in your relationship with God?