

# Film Review: Emma Stone, Viola Davis Lend a Hand to ‘The Help’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 10, 2011 - 7:56am

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CHICAGO – Using fiction to express the importance of real historical events is seductive and sometimes disingenuous. The new film “The Help” manages to counteract that notion through high level, emotional performances.



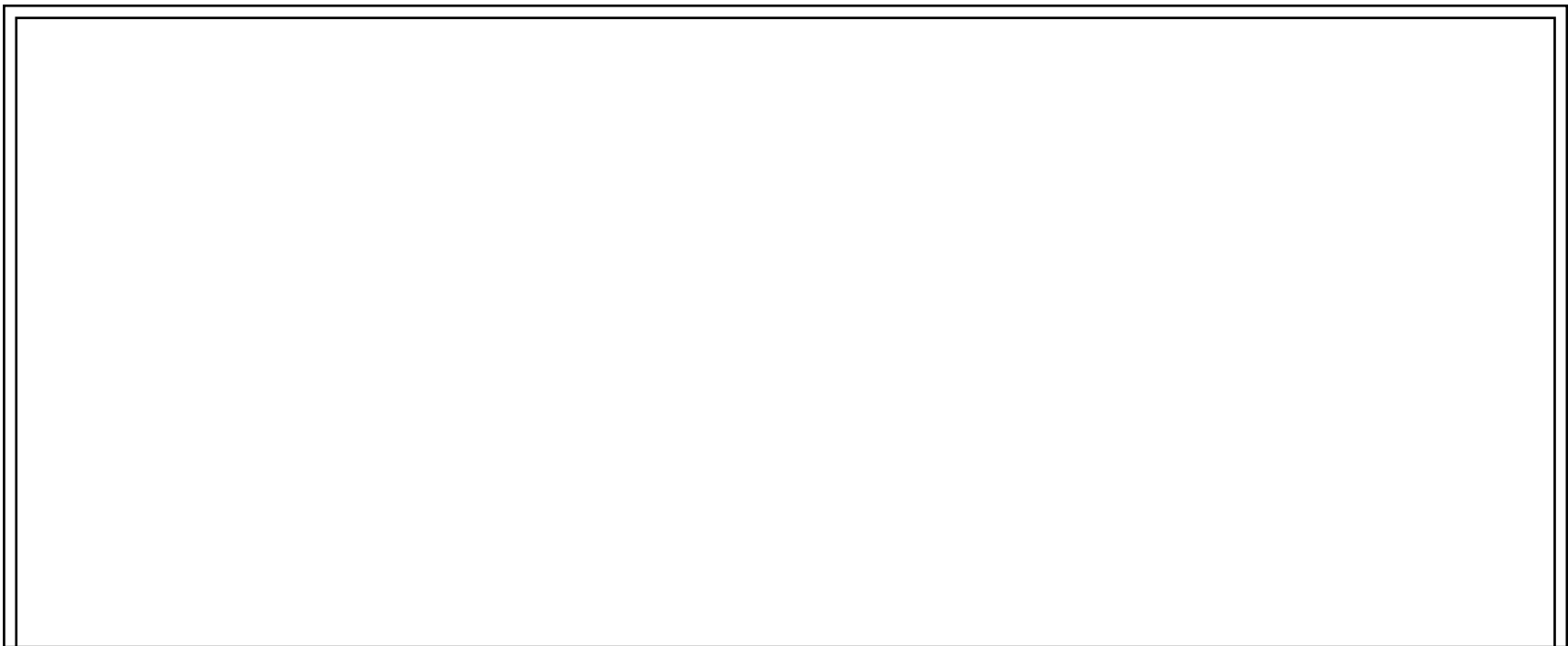
Based on the bestselling novel by Kathryn Stockett, the film version of The Help brings to life the story of a young female Mississippi college grad, because she wants something more for her life, taking a risk by collecting the stories of African American maids during the early 1960s civil rights era. Although the events in the narrative may have been impossible, given the real-life situation in the South at the time, the emotional portrayals and sincerity of the characters make for a truncated lesson in tolerance and acceptance.

Skeeter (Emma Stone) has just graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1962. Coming back to her hometown of Jackson, she sees the potential rut of her life through her married friends like Hilly (Bryce Dallas Howard). After getting a job writing an advice column for housewives about cleaning, she seeks out a local maid named Aibileen (Viola Davis) to help her with the tips. In Aibileen she sees something more, and to impress a book editor in New York City she pitches the idea of writing about the experiences of African American maids in the South, and calling the book “The Help.”

This pursuit has not shaken the quest of her mother (Allison Janney) to find her a husband, nor does the book get off the ground until Minny (Octavia Spencer) comes aboard. The writing, publishing and reaction to the book is the foundation of the story, filled with characters like a wannabe belle named Celia (Jessica Chastain), the eccentric Southern matriarch Missus Walters (Sissy Spacek) and memories of Skeeter’s own caregiver, Constantine (Cicely Tyson).

*“The Help” opens everywhere August 10th. Featuring Emma Stone, Viola Davis, Bryce Dallas Howard, Octavia Spencer, Cicely Tyson, Jessica Chastain, Allison Janney and Sissy Spacek. Based on the novel by Kathryn Stockett and adapted for the screen and directed by Tate Taylor. Rated “PG-13”.*

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Viola Davis (left) as Aibileen and Octavia Spencer as Minny in ‘The Help’  
*Photo credit: Dale Robinette for DreamWorks Pictures*

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