



JOIN THE POP CULTURE INVASION

[SPORTS](#) [FOOD](#) [WEDDING](#) [ABOUT](#) [COMIC BOOK](#)

Movie Moms: 4 to Loathe & 4 to Love

Posted by [Sarah Katz](#) - 05/11/2013 - [Features](#), [Movies](#), [This Chick's Flicks](#)



Kathleen Turner in Serial Mom: © 1994 Savoy [Pictures](#). Joan Allen in Pleasantville: © 1998 New Line Cinema, Inc.

There are few bonds as revered as that of mother-child. In theory, it is always a wholesome and inviolable connection. In reality, it is frequently a cherished, but rarely easy, relationship.

Despite film's frequent use of dramatic license, most **movie moms** are made largely in the mold of their real-life counterparts. Many movie moms love their children without loving everything their kids do or say, protect them as well as humanly possible, and fiercely defend their maternal right to be the only person who gets to yell when their children screw up. Some other movie moms, however, remind us that membership in the motherhood does not automatically imbue a woman with unceasing kindness and warmth.

In honor of **Mother's Day**, this tribute to movie moms highlights four matriarchs who tend toward **loathable** (mothers you should be glad are not yours), and four who are **lovable** (mothers you'd be glad to call your own).

To be clear, this is 'loathable' and 'lovable' in a manner closer to that of an angsty teen, rather than the terms' purest definitions. Not up for discussion are the truly alarming movie moms, those whose girl group would be called 'The Extremes'—ex. *Carrie's* Margaret White (**Piper Laurie**), *Mommie Dearest's* Joan Crawford (**Faye Dunaway**), *Serial Mom's* Beverly R. Sutphin (**Kathleen Turner**), and *Precious's* Mary (**Mo'Nique**). Nor were movie moms whose films are most aptly described as BYOT ("bring your own tissues") included—ex. *Terms of Endearment* (1983), *Steel Magnolias* (1989), and *Stepmom* (1998). After all, Mother's Day is supposed to be a holiday of celebration and merriment, not terror and tears.

And by no means is this list exhaustive, for Hollywood has given us many, many movie moms to loathe and love.

Anne Hamilton (Joan Allen)

The Notebook (2004)

[Amazon](#)...[iTunes](#)...[Google Play](#)...[YouTube](#)



© 2004 New Line Cinema

STATUS: **LOATHABLE**

Hell-bent on keeping her daughter Allie (**Rachel McAdams**) from ruining her future by taking up with the 'wrong' sort of man, Anne Hamilton takes a page out of Niccolò Machiavelli's playbook. Letting her desired ends justify her means, Anne spends years lying, manipulating, and tampering with federal mail to keep Allie and Noah (**Ryan Gosling**) apart. Did she have her reasons? Maybe. But her methods caused way more destruction than necessary. (Hello?! The woman made Ryan Gosling sad. There is clearly no limit to her

depravity.)

Leigh Anne Tuohy (Sandra Bullock)

The Blind Side (2009)

[Amazon](#)...[iTunes](#)...[Google Play](#)...[YouTube](#)

STATUS: **LOVABLE**

Leigh Anne Tuohy is a classy, sassy, and truly fierce mama bear. When her keen maternal instincts sense something amiss with another mama's cub, she immediately ensconces him within her well-protected and well-designed lair. Neither friends or family, nor gang members, teachers, or Social Services will stand between Leigh Anne and her cubs' best interests. The kind of woman who knows that anything worth having is worth fighting for, Leigh Anne is a mother that every child would be lucky to have watching their six.



© 2009 Warner Bros.



© 2005 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation

Sydelle Feller (Candice Azzara)

In Her Shoes (2005)

[Amazon](#)...[iTunes](#)...[Google Play](#)...[YouTube](#)

STATUS: **LOATHABLE**

An unfortunate step-monster, Sydelle's endless comparisons between "my Marcia" and her step-daughters—Rose (**Toni Collette**) and Maggie (**Cameron Diaz**)—are inevitably unfavorable to the

latter. Anxious to remove all traces of her non-biological children from her house, Sydelle evicts

Maggie and co-opts her former bedroom to convert it to a nursery for Marcia's baby...before Marcia is even pregnant. Sydelle goes above and beyond, however, when she volunteers to throw Rose a [bridal shower](#), invites only her own friends, and uses the opportunity to amuse herself with a cruel montage mocking Rose's personality and less-than-ideal physical stature.

Marmee (Susan Sarandon)

Little Women (1994)

[Amazon](#)...[iTunes](#)...[Google Play](#)...[YouTube](#)

STATUS: **LOVABLE**

Ever [the voice](#) of reason and love, Marmee's fortitude and forbearance in difficult times is unmatched. Marmee proudly stands by her man and their shared principles, despite what doing so has cost them. She abjures

'society' and its ways, but encourages her girls to decide for themselves. Though they lack material wealth, Marmee ensures that her daughters' lives are rich with knowledge, culture, and affection. The warmth Marmee provides melts the chill of winter and war, and the cold shoulders of most who encounter the March girls.



© 1994 Columbia Pictures



© 2008 Summit Entertainment

Jessica Wilhern (Catherine O'Hara)

Penelope (2008)

[Amazon](#)...[iTunes](#)

STATUS: **LOATHABLE**

Former socialite Jessica Wilhern is the victim of a terrible curse—just ask her; she'll tell you. Her daughter Penelope (**Christina Ricci**) was born with porcine ears and a snout, courtesy of a curse cast upon the Wilhern family generations before. To hide this shame from the

public eye, Jessica faked infant Penelope's death (via faux funeral and cremation), beat a paparazzo until he lost an eye, and imprisoned her own flesh and blood within the confines of their home. Eighteen-plus years later, and obsessed with breaking the curse by marrying Penelope to "one of [their] own kind," Jessica arranges for high-born suitors to court Penelope through one-way glass—so as not to be preemptively frightened away by her face. And, on top of all that, Jessica never misses an opportunity to remind Penelope of how hideous her "great, great, great-grandfather's nose" is, and how life cannot be good until it is gone. She is a paragon of unconditional love that every mother should aspire to. Not.

Mrs. Gump (Sally Field)

Forrest Gump (1994)

[Amazon](#)...[iTunes](#)...[Google Play](#)...[YouTube](#)

STATUS: **LOVABLE**

There is literally nothing that Mrs. Gump wouldn't do for her boy Forrest—just ask the local public school administrator. A strong, single, working mother in the 1950s South would have had it hard enough without the additional burden of Forrest's special needs. Yet, guided by maternal dedication and with patience most would deem miraculous, Mrs. Gump never failed to make time for bedtime stories, and always made good use of her special “way of explaining things so [Forrest] could understand.”



© 1994 Paramount Pictures



© 2005 Focus Features

Mrs. Bennet (Brenda Blethyn)

Pride & Prejudice (2005)

[Amazon](#)...[iTunes](#)...[Google Play](#)...[YouTube](#)

STATUS: **LOATHABLE**

As the Georgian era wife of a landed gentleman to whom she bore five daughters, Mrs. Bennet is a woman consumed by thoughts of only one topic: marriage. Not her own marriage, of course—which is shipshape so long as Mr. Bennet toes her party line—rather those of her girls' imminent futures. Though her motives are good, her machinations to sell her daughters to the highest-bidders reek of an uncomfortable and socially unacceptable “lack of propriety.” Worthy of a sardonic chorus of “Matchmaker, Matchmaker,” Mrs. Bennet's yente-like actions are appalling even to those of us who have real Jewish mothers. Add to this the ailments caused by her “poor nerves,” and it is no wonder that Mr. Bennet spends so much time in his study.

Maria Portokalos (Lainie Kazan)

My Big Fat Greek Wedding (2002)

[Amazon](#)...[iTunes](#)

STATUS: **LOVABLE**

Maria Portokalos does it all. (“*I run the restaurant, I cook, I clean, I wash for you, and I raise three kids...and I teach Sunday school.*”) She knows how to get what she wants, and what is best for her family, without emasculating her husband. (“*The man is*



© 2002 IFC Films

the head [of the house], but the woman is the neck. And she can turn the head any way she wants.”) She is always ready, willing, and able to host a family get-together or make one of her children a hot meal. (Toula: “My mom was always cooking food filled with warmth and wisdom, and never forgetting that sidedish of steaming hot guilt.” / Maria: “Niko, don’t play with the food. When I was your age, we didn’t have food!”) And, on top of all that, Maria is also a veritable fount of practical advice for every situation her children may encounter. (“[O]n my wedding night, my mother, she said to me, ‘Greek women, we may be lambs in the kitchen, but we are tigers in the bedroom.’”)

Loathable runners-up: *American Beauty’s* Carolyn Burnham (**Annette Bening**), *The Mirror Has Two Faces’* Hannah Morgan (**Lauren Bacall**), *Miss Potter’s* Helen Potter (**Barbara Flynn**), and *The Young Victoria’s* Duchess of Kent (**Miranda Richardson**).

Lovable runners-up: *The Family Stone’s* Sybil Stone (**Diane Keaton**), *Pleasantville’s* Betty Parker (**Joan Allen**), *Troop Beverly Hills’* Phyllis Nefler (**Shelley Long**), and *The Wedding Date’s* Bunny (**Holland Taylor**).

To all the moms out there (and mine in particular)...

♥♥ HAPPY MOTHER’S DAY! ♥♥

Share your loathable and lovable movie moms in the comments below!
And don’t forget to check out other [Screen Invasion tributes to Mother’s Day!](#)

Serial Mom: [Amazon](#)

Pleasantville: [Amazon](#) • [iTunes](#) • [Google Play](#) • [YouTube](#)



Follow @sarahdkatz

Check out Sarah’s [Author Archive](#) for her other Reviews, Features, and Interviews, and her feature column [This Chick’s Flicks](#) for pieces on the *chick flicks* of now and then.