

MOANA INSPIRES HEROISM IN VIEWERS

by LINA SALEH

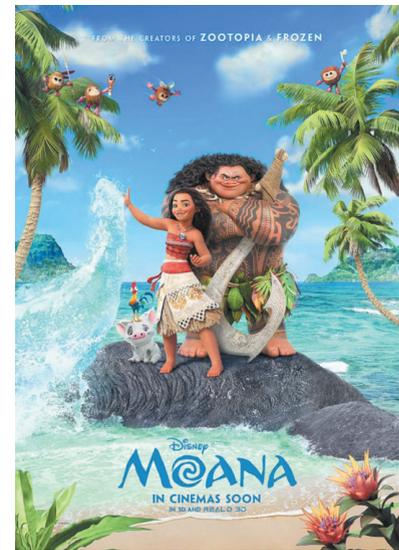


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An adventurous girl who longs for the sea, a demigod who just wants to be appreciated by mankind, and an entertainingly stupid animal sidekick. What do you get when you put this ragtag team together to sail the seas and save the world? You find a heroine's tale known as "Moana."

"Moana" is a hero's journey story surrounding the exploits of the titular Polynesian island child. As daughter of the village chief, Moana is in line to take over

the responsibilities of her island Motunui someday, destined to insure that her people prosper. Strong, independent, and an excellent delegator, Moana is on track to become a great leader in the eyes of her father, except for one tiny, little problem.

Since childhood, Moana has been obsessed with the ocean and sailing past the island's barrier reef, contradicting one of Motunui's fundamental rules. So, her father has spent most of her life trying to discourage her from the idea of running to the water.

In the world of "Moana," the great goddess of the Earth, Te Fiti, had blessed the islands with bountiful nature to live off of, with all of her power coming directly from her heart. But when demigod hero Maui stole the mystical heart of Te Fiti's core many years ago and lost it in the sea, the island began destroying itself from the inside out, spreading to each island until the day that all would be lost. When the destruction finally reaches Motunui, leaving her people with no fruit to gather and no fish to hunt, Moana is chosen by the spirit of the ocean and given the heart of Te Fiti to set out on her quest. Her mission: find Maui, make him board

her boat, and sail him to Te Fiti so that he may return the heart from where he stole it so long ago.

While it may have seemed like an easy enough task in the beginning, Moana runs into trouble when she learns that teaching yourself how to sail without any experience is harder than it looks, and disgraced former heroes are more difficult to work with than you might think. But, through it all she perseveres alongside him to save her island and her people, and prove that there was a reason that the ocean called for her.

In her quest to save the world around her, Moana is forced to cooperate with Maui and figure out how to get along during their journey together. But, as time goes on, their relationship becomes less of a forced, angry partnership and more of a friendship, with each of them teaching the other important lessons to carry on in their lives after their adventure is over. Maui is the realism to Moana's more idealistic views on the role and work of a hero, oftentimes a little cynical about the idea of Moana being chosen by fate or destiny to accomplish the ocean's task. Alongside one another, each manage to take something on from the other's viewpoint, with Moana recognizing that heroic tasks are fulfilled by determination rather than by destiny, and Maui realizing that sometimes it's best to perform heroic feats because they are necessary and not because of what you can get out of them.

Illuminating this heroine's journey through the sea is a visual palette of beautiful oceans, detailed streaming curly hair, and fluid movement that can't help but catch your eye. And the soundtrack, some of it written by theatre's Lin-Manuel Miranda of Hamilton and In the Heights fame, is a set of songs to remember for their rhythmic tunes and heartening words.

With a fun take on the little done heroine's journey decorated by an inspiring soundtrack and gorgeously fluid animation, "Moana" is the Mulan movie of 2016 that reminds us that being chosen by destiny is less about fate and more so about how determined you are to accomplish what you've dreamed of.