

Les Malheurs de Sophie – *Sophie's Misfortunes*
Version originale: français/ English subtitles



http://www.senscritique.com/film/Les_Malheurs_de_Sophie/13394677

Director: Christophe Honoré
Release date: April 20, 2016
Genre: comedy/family
Countries of origin: France
Length: 106 min.

SYNOPSIS

Sophie's Misfortunes (the film) is an adaptation of the popular children's novel by Comtesse de Ségur, published in 1858. Set in the 19th Century, the film follows the adventures of Sophie, a mischievous, endearing little girl who has a wild imagination.

From her castle, young Sophie can't resist the temptation of the forbidden and what she loves most of all is to get up to no-good with her cousin Paul. When her parents decide to go to America, Sophie is delighted.

A year later, she's back in France with her horrible stepmother, Madame Fichini. But Sophie will be able to count on her two friends, model little girls, and their mother, Madame de Fleurville to escape from her stepmother's clutches.

(Part of the synopsis from Unifrance)

FILM REVIEWS

Christophe Honoré invites us to get back into Sophie's adventures just when she receives her famous doll. By then, she is living with her mother and she is cared for by loving servants, who are nevertheless annoyed by her cheeky nature. But she embraces life to its fullest and loves to discover the world around her ... even if it means to get into mischief.

The first part is framed into a "joie de vivre" portrayed by Baptistin – a servant who also acts as a narrator and talks directly to the audience. In the course of her adventures, while Sophie plays with her cousin Paul and her friends Camille and Madeleine, the trip to America is taking shape. Sophie's mother is increasingly weary while her father is never present which is his main attribute in the film.

At the same time as he is creating a film for a children's audience, Christophe Honoré wonderfully depicts the reality of an era by giving women their fair position and emphasizing the important role they played in children's upbringing, as did the Church by the way.

A change in the story and its style will occur. Madame de Fleurville (Camille and Madeleine's mother) is now the narrator. She tells us about Sophie's big journey and all the misfortunes that happened. The child is now raised by her stepmother, Madame Fichini, and we find her quite changed. The film second part is dominated by **the vitality of Sophie in spite of her horrible stepmother's disapproval, under the approving gaze of Madame de Fleurville.**

(Translated from the review by Nicolas Gilson)

Christophe Honoré nous invite à replonger dans les aventures de Sophie au moment où elle reçoit sa fameuse poupée. Elle vit alors avec sa mère, entourée de domestiques aimants quoique agacés par son caractère effronté. Mais elle croque la vie à pleines dents et aime à découvrir ce qui l'entoure... quitte à faire des bêtises.

La première partie du film s'inscrit dans cette joie de vivre, contée par Baptistin – un personnage qui se meut en bonimenteur et s'adresse directement à nous. Au fil des épisodes, alors que Sophie s'amuse avec son cousin Paul et ses amies Camille et Madeleine, le départ pour l'Amérique se dessine. La mère de Sophie est déjà de plus en plus fatiguée tandis que son père trouve dans l'absence sa principale caractéristique. Tout en pensant son film pour les enfants, Christophe Honoré dépeint à merveille la réalité d'une époque en offrant notamment aux leur juste place et en soulignant le rôle

prépondérant des femmes – mais aussi de l'Eglise – dans l'éducation des enfants.

Un basculement s'opèrera alors, autant d'un point de vue narratif qu'esthétique. La mère de Camille et de Madeleine, Madame de Fleurville reprend le rôle de narrateur. Elle nous conte le grand départ de Sophie et les grands malheurs qui en découlent. L'enfant est aujourd'hui éduquée par sa belle-mère, Madame Fichini, et nous la retrouvons bien changée. Un second mouvement dominé par la vitalité de Sophie pourtant rabrouée par l'horrible belle-mère s'écrit sous le regard bienveillant de Madame de Fleurville (Nicolas Gilson)

<http://www.ungrandmoment.be/critique-les-malheurs-de-sophie/>

Berlin: Gaumont Brings Kiddie Lit's 'Sophie' to the Bigscreen (Elsa Keslassy)

<http://variety.com/2015/film/global/berlin-gaumont-brings-kiddie-lits-sophie-to-big-screen-1201423371/>

"Gaumont's desire to take a part in this adventure came about naturally after seeing the commercial performance of 'Belle and Sebastien', which was a hit in France and abroad," explained Adeline Falampin, Gaumont's international sales manager.

"Both 'Belle and Sebastien' and 'Sophie's Misfortunes' revive classic literature adaptations to the big screen. They cater to children as well as their parents and grandparents," said Falampin. "What we call the 'Madeleine de Proust,' the sharing and transmission experience across all generations, will be the driving force of our marketing approach on 'Sophie's Misfortunes,' as it was on 'Belle and Sebastien.' We'll be promote the film through republishing of books, music clips, etc.," added Falampin. Christophe Honoré will stay truthful to the book's 19th-century refined imagery with Empire dresses, sublime castles and gardens.

"Sophie's Misfortunes" is a major departure for Honoré, who is best-known for auteur dramas inspired by the French New Wave such as "The Beautiful Person" and "The Beloved," which competed at Cannes. **But Falampin points out Honoré started his career writing kids novels and has found with Sophie's intrepid character a muse that inspires him to explore again the world of children."**

DETAILS

LANGUAGE

The language in the film reflects the proper way aristocrats spoke. No coarse words. A very clean language.

VIOLENCE

Restrained portrayals of limited violence which may result in extremely limited bloodletting.

In the context of 19th century ways of punishing children, whipping is allowed but at **no time in the film it is done explicitly.**

- Once Sophie's mother threatens her daughter to do so but she gives the idea up.
- However Madame Fichini, the stepmother, decides to whip Sophie. No image is seen and hardly any sound is heard as Sophie refuses to give her stepmother the satisfaction of complaining.

A few brief slaps on Sophie's face by Madeleine (once) and by Madame Fichini occur in the second part of the film. No visible redness or other sign on the skin. All is within the context of Sophie's actions frustrating Madame Fichini or one of her friends.

Children playfully brawl with no sign of physical injury.

In a dream sequence when Sophie thinks about her cousin Paul in America, she imagines him on a horse being observed by "Indians": one man is pointing his arch and arrow at Paul. No further development is seen as Sophie wakes up.

Some bloodletting resulting from a carriage accident:

- a horse is seen lying on its side
- a man is complaining about his arm. His death by accident is implied when a blanket is pulled over him
- a woman is briefly seen with some blood around her shoulder. She is taken away on a stretcher in a cart.

It seems that the horses are safe and sound as a man leads them to the stables of Madame Fleurville's castle.

Animals are CARTOONS:

-Sophie and Paul trap a squirrel that, later, escapes from Sophie's room. By running away from the little girl, the squirrel falls and breaks 2 legs (not seen). Sophie then squeezes the squirrel (cartoon) which dies.

- Madame de Fleurville's castle keeper shoots the mother of the baby hedgehogs: some cartoonish bloodletting. The excuse is that hedgehogs are harmful animals.

NUDITY

None

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

None

HORROR

None

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

S O P H I E

Sophie's mischiefs

THE DOLL

- Sophie exposes her doll in the sun in spite of being told that it will melt in the sun
- She soaks her doll in hot water, which triggers the loss of its feet
- The doll's funeral with unconventional words: Sophie screams that it is ugly and that she hates it.

THE GOLDFISHES

- Sophie wants to feed her doll so she grabs the goldfish in the bowl and decides to cut them in pieces. The cutting is implied.
- Noémie (Sophie's "maid") faints at the sight of the cut fish (very brief shot of the fish).
- Sophie's mother is weary of her daughter's action.

STEALING HER MOTHER'S GOLD SEWING KIT

- Sophie lies about the fact that she stole the golden scissors.

SERVING FAKE TEA TO HER FRIENDS

Sophie invites her friends to drink tea she made from the dog's water bowl with milk from white soapy water and with sugar made out of pieces of chalk.

WALKING ON FROZEN LAKE AGAINST ADULTS'ADVICE

Sophie falls down in the opening of the frozen water as she is trying to find the baby hedgehogs for little Marguerite

STEPPING ON HER FRIENDS "CHRISTMAS" FLOWERS & MISSING LITTLE

MARGUERITE AS SHE THROWS PINE CONES AT HER

Sophie is fearless as she climbs on a pine tree without caring about her little friend's flowers.

Sophie's punishment

The usual punishment for children consists in staying in their room eating bread and drinking water or being deprived of chocolate and dessert.

Whipping a child for being disobedient is also another form of traditional punishment as we can guess in the film, where the actual whipping is not shown. Sophie receives a few slaps from her impatient stepmother.

The positive point: Mesdames Fleurville and de Rosbourg (as did Sophie's mother before) disapprove of whipping a child.

Sophie's relationship with her parents

- Sophie's father is always away and never seen. Did Sophie try to express her feelings against her dad by mistreating the doll he sent her as a gift?
- Sophie's mother is in distress, as she does not want to go to America. Is Sophie playing with her mother's weakness by getting up to mischief?
- Sophie's mother's death is affecting the little girl as she is looking for her in her dreams or in the gardens of the castle.

-Sophie handles her stepmother's hostility with great strength by refusing to show emotion. However, Madame Fichini uses harsh words towards Sophie: nasty, unbearable, heartless, no love, etc.

📖 **Sophie's episode with the priest**

Father Huc's influence on the family – especially Sophie's mother – is great. He emphasizes how Sophie is "impudent" by having her accept that she has a "bird's brain".

MADAME FICHINI

📖 **The typical yet comical wicked stepmother of fairy tales**

Her character is in fact very funny because the filmmaker is obviously on Sophie's side in spite of her nasty remarks and phoniness.

📖 **Her ridiculous views on servants**

She chooses them ugly and physically crooked so that they cannot betray her. She finds Madame de Fleurville's man of all trades (not a butler) too handsome to be honest.

MADAME de FLEURVILLE

Her character represents the idealized image of a mother: fair, kind, generous, tolerant, and against the use of the whip.

The film concludes on a positive note as Sophie stays with Madame de Fleurville and sings in the rain with her friends Camille, Madeleine and Marguerite.



<https://www.westwing.fr/magazine/rencontres/malheurs-de-sophie-zoom-decors-film/>

Madame de Rosbourg and Madame de Fleurville as affectionate, fair and generous mothers

SOPHIE'S MISFORTUNES PICTURES



<http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm-234318/photos/detail/?cmediafile=21281314>

Sophie playing with her doll



<https://www.westwing.fr/magazine/rencontres/malheurs-de-sophie-zoom-decors-film/>

Sophie soaks her doll in hot water



<https://letailleursincere.net/cinema-les-malheurs-de-sophie/>

The stepmother closing the door in order to whip Sophie



<http://en.unifrance.org/movie/39599/sophie-s-misfortunes?logged=1479681607127#&gid=1&pid=3>

The stepmother Madame Fichini saying goodbye to Sophie before leaving for Italy



<https://detailleursincere.net/cinema-les-malheurs-de-sophie/>

Camille, Madeleine, Sophie and her cousin Paul



<http://www.milkmagazine.net/les-malheurs-de-sophie-selon-christophe-honore/>

Happy ending: Sophie will live with her friends Camille, Madeleine and Marguerite with their gentle mothers