

# *“Ferdinand”*

By *Helen Lutz*

“The Story of Ferdinand” written in the 1930’s by Munro Leaf is a classic children’s story, from what I’ve heard. So many times I’ve read the book before I ever see a movie, but in this case I suppose my education and the child rearing skills of my parents come up short – I’ve never read the book. I am unable to fault my parents, however, for depriving me of the opportunity to read the ‘classics’ since I never introduced the book to my daughters either. This is probably a good thing as I was able to see the movie “Ferdinand” as a family Christmas movie (with no overly critical baggage).



We first meet Ferdinand (voiced by Colin H. Murphy) as a calf at Casa Del Toro, a ranch known for raising the finest bulls for the Madrid arena. All the young calves are out in the yard butting heads with their baby horns, each wanting to be the strongest; all except Ferdinand. Ferdinand refrains from the melee as long as possible while sneaking water out to a lonely flower in the yard. Ferdinand would much rather smell the flowers than fight, which leads to tons of bullying by the other calves and even their parents.

Excitement comes to the yard when one of the matadors approaches the ranch. All the bulls yearn to be chosen so they can enter the arena and prevail over the matadors. It’s such an honor to be chosen. It’s time for Ferdinand’s dad and Valiente’s father to match up in the ring, both hoping to be chosen to accompany the matador to the big dance. Ferdinand’s dad is selected; and never seen again.

Making friends with three little hedgehogs, Una (Gina Fernandez), Dos (Daveed Diggs) and Cuatro (Gabriel Iglesias), Ferdinand escapes the confines of the ranch and races to freedom eventually ending up in a little piece of heaven – a flower farm. The farmer’s daughter, Nina (voiced by Lily Day) adopts Ferdinand as her pet even to the point of having him sleep with her. Life happily passes by and as Nina grows, so does Ferdinand (now voiced by John Cerna). He blossoms into a prize bull, even bigger than his father, but very gentle – still loving flowers.

The time comes for the annual Flower Festival in town and Ferdinand can hardly wait, it is one of his favorite events. However, this year he is told he must remain on the farm since he is just too big to accompany the family. Feeling alone and depressed, Ferdinand tries to settle into staying home – stay or go – stay or go? Ferdinand decides to go anyway, the festival is such fun. Unfortunately, Ferdinand ends up being the bull in a china shop – literally; accidentally running amuck through the festival and, once captured, returned to good old Casa Del Toro. Life is miserable for Ferdinand – choices have consequences.

A family friendly film, the cast of characters make “Ferdinand” a fun story for young and old alike. The calming goat Lupe (voiced by Kate McKinnon) steals most of her scenes as she sees herself more as a coach than a goat. The haughty German prancing and dancing steeds keep us laughing. Director Carlos Saldanha also delivers important messages about bullying, character and friendship. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats ... I give “Ferdinand” THREE HARTS. The humor works well for the kiddos as well as the grownups!