

## Atlas Shrugged: Part 1 - Does 'part 1' always mean there's a sequel?

Adaptations should never be compared to the source material. A different artist with a different vision is creating their interpretation of a preexisting work of art. How people expect the two versions to be comparable has never been explained, but alas...they do. Atlas Shrugged is based upon the 1957 novel of the same name written by Ayn Rand. Ayn Rand is not the kind of author who can be appreciated by anyone; in fact she was a very polarizing author with well-defined opinions which were woven beautifully, but indelicately in her work. This has caused a large, dedicated and almost pretentious fan base to emerge, rallying behind her novels, for they deal with an objectivist philosophy. There is a feeling that this dedication will transfer over to the film, denying how bad it is and continuing to pump blood into a dead body in hopes of making it live again. Simply because Ayn Rand's name is associated with this film, one can expect many in-depth explanations of why the film is good and why we're "dumb" for not liking it, but hopefully people will be able to look past the source material, along with the ranting and raving, and see the film for what it is...boring. Boring may sound like an unsophisticated way of describing a film of such *elevated* subject matter, but the one thing a film is not supposed to be is boring, and unfortunately Atlas Shrugged is. The film digresses into long sequences featuring dialogue which is foreign to the viewer, and it's not because we don't "get it," it's because it's poorly executed and longwinded. We mostly hear business oriented *talk*...things you'd find in a publication associated with the industry. We hear things about steel and railroads, we sit in on meetings where people sip drinks yet nothing is being explained.

The story follows Dagny Taggart, a competent visionary in a futuristic world where the only things that are noticeable are trains and mediocrity. She runs a company called "Taggart Transcontinental," which is unable to use steel provided by Hank Rearden, a mild love interest, because his steel is superior to other steels. In many depictions of the future from various authors mediocrity is a common threat. In Kurt Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron" the best looking or smartest people are handicapped to create a sense of averageness so no one's feelings are hurt. Ayn Rand connects more of a political critique into her shadowy vision of the future, having the government forbid companies from owning other companies and punishing above average work. This of course is anti-government, anti-union sentiment.

The film moves slow, features some beautiful cinematography in a very naturalistic and complacent way, but fails everywhere else. There is no entertainment value here. It just exists like one of the railroads depicted in the film (and there's plenty to choose from), unbroken, unchanging, and 9 times out of ten...uneventful. If you agree with Ayn's philosophy then the themes are there, but will provide no more insight than offered in the book. The film's title indicates with "Part 1" that there's going to be at least a second installment, and I suppose the filmmakers thought it sufficient to keep the character of John Galt shadowed and mysterious, for there's absolutely nothing else which would make anyone want to continue this film version of the story in any capacity. Fans of the novel will be disappointed...despite what they might say.