

# NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

**Rated:** PG • **Running Time:** 1 hour, 49 minutes  
**Starring:** Ben Stiller as Larry Daley; Robin Williams as Teddy; Dick Van Dyke as Cecil; Carla Gugino as Rebecca; Owen Wilson as Jedediah; Steve Coogan as Octavius; Mickey Rooney as Gus; Ricky Gervais as Dr. McPhee  
**Director:** Shawn Levy

**Themes:** Perseverance, teamwork, meeting people at their point of need, challenges of divorce and parenting, trustworthiness, empathy, the richness of history, extending

## Story Summary

Greatness has eluded Larry Daley. Attempts to make a name for himself have left this down-and-out dreamer and divorced dad in need of a job and desperate to earn his 10-year-old son's respect. Larry feels a sense of urgency now that his ex-wife is set to remarry, so he grudgingly accepts a menial night-watchman position at New York's Museum of Natural History. Cutbacks have forced the curator to retire the three elderly guards—Cecil, Gus and Reginald—in favor of one young newcomer. Despite some resentment, the outgoing watchmen (who appear to have something up their sleeves) feel that Larry will be a *useful* replacement.

Guests gone. Employees clocked-out. Doors locked. Larry settles in for a dull shift surrounded by wax dummies, static dioramas and silence, save for the echo of his own footsteps on the cold marble floor. But his first night on the job proves to be no ordinary assignment. First, the skeleton of a toothy tyrannosaurus vanishes from its pedestal. Flashlight in hand, Larry finds it drinking from a water fountain, and soon discovers that everything in the museum comes to life after dark.

With Cecil's cryptic advice ringing in his ears ("Don't let anything in or out"), Larry calls his predecessor, who directs him to a dog-eared set of instructions for surviving the chaos. It turns out the marauding dinosaur wants nothing more than to play fetch. But keeping it busy is the least of Larry's problems. Attila the Hun and his henchmen are on the loose, a Civil War reenactment has gotten totally out of hand, and miniature civilizations want to destroy each other. Larry must also cage hungry lions while keeping a mischievous capuchin monkey from stealing his keys. Lucky for him, Teddy Roosevelt charges in and helps him restore order.

Overwhelmed and tempted to quit, Larry realizes that success requires perseverance and hard work. Teddy issues the challenge, "Some men are born to greatness. Others have it thrust upon them. For you, this is that very moment." So Larry decides to study up on his history for a better understanding of the characters in his care. He scours the library and hunts down information on the Internet. He picks the brain of a pretty tour guide fascinated with Sacajawea. And after a rocky introduction to four-inch cowboy Jedediah and his equally miniscule rival, Octavius

grace, looking past conflict to find common ground

**Cautions:** A mystical Egyptian tablet gives the exhibits life. There are brief references to Darwinism and Attila the Hun's fascination with dark sorcery. Language is limited to a few innuendos, "oh my god"s and the phrase "Don't be a kiss-a--." A monkey urinates on Larry. There's lots of mild action violence, though battles on the museum floor usually have a humorous edge.

of the Roman Legion, Larry tries to show those warring factions from the diorama room what they have in common.

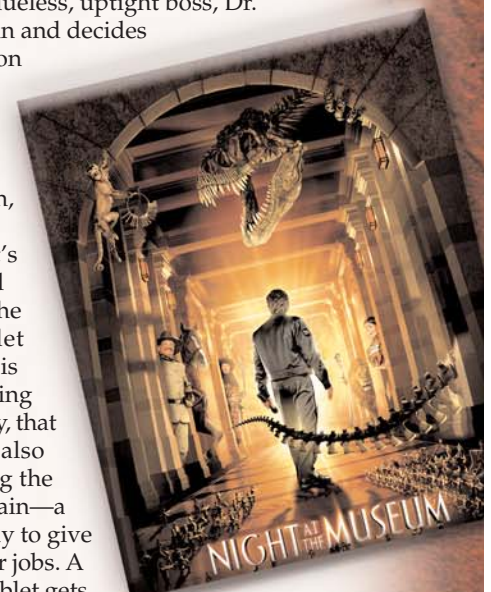
Despite nightly challenges (such as having a Neanderthal wander outside and turn to dust at daybreak) and hassles from his clueless, uptight boss, Dr. McPhee, Larry settles in and decides

to let his son, Nick, in on his secret. Eager to score points with the boy, he takes him to work but is shocked and embarrassed when, at the appointed time, nothing happens. That's because Cecil, Gus and Reginald have stolen the ancient Egyptian tablet of Ahkmenrah, which is responsible for animating the exhibits. Apparently, that powerful artifact was also responsible for making the old men feel young again—a perk they weren't ready to give up when they lost their jobs. A fight ensues and the tablet gets activated before it falls back into Cecil's hands. Larry's task: Get everyone in the museum to put aside their differences, band together and recover the tablet before sunup.

## Before You Watch

Volunteer with your teen in a Sunday school class full of children somewhere between the ages of 3 and 6. The more chaos the better. In addition to providing an hour of valuable service to your church, you'll create a memory together and have greater empathy for Larry as he takes on his own challenge of bringing order out of chaos at the museum.

**Bible Bookmarks** Ex. 20; 1 Kings 19:11-13; Prov. 3:5-6; Matt. 5:9 and 31-32, 23:11-12; John 4:1-15, 5:1-9, 9:1-7, 13:12-17, 21:4-14; Luke 9:46-48; 1 Cor. 7:10-11



## Talking Points

**1** Which character that came to life after dark was your favorite? Did it interest you enough that you'd like to know more about its place in history?

**2** Larry connected with the exhibits when he became sensitive to what they hungered for, and cared enough to meet them at unique points of need. Discuss four or five instances. The gospels contain many examples of how Jesus connected with others that way. Read several from the book of John (4:1-15; 5:1-9; 9:1-7; 13:12-17; 21:4-14). How can we apply this principle to our lives?

**3** What do you think the filmmakers wanted to say about divorce? Talk about the difficulties Larry, his son and his ex-wife faced as a result of their fractured family. How did witnessing those challenges make you feel? Discuss ways divorce has impacted your family, directly or indirectly. Read God's perspective in Matthew 5:31-32 and 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. Then contrast that with the culture's casual attitudes about ending a marriage.

**4** How is the instruction list that Cecil left for Larry like the list of instructions God gave His people in Exodus 20?

**5** Nick's soon-to-be-stepdad, Don, is loaded down with cell phones and pagers. How is his goofy "utility belt" both a symbol of his success *and* a form of bondage? Do you think it's wise to be so connected and available to everyone? Discuss a healthy balance, as well as why Christians should take special care not to drown out God's "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:11-13) with everything from cell phones to iPods.

**6** Getting sworn enemies to put aside conflict and work toward a common goal is no easy task, though it's an important one (Matt. 5:9). How did Larry accomplish that? Is there a similar situation in your life? Ask God whether He's preparing you to step up as a peacemaker, and consider how you might do it.

**7** Larry reached a critical moment when he needed Nick to trust him (activating the tablet), even though it seemed irrational to the boy. Ask your teen, "Have I ever told you to do something—or *not* do something—that didn't make much sense at the time? What was it?" Did obedience follow? If not, were there consequences? Proverbs 3:5-6 describes a similar trust, the one we should have in our heavenly Father. How has this played out in your spiritual journey?

**8** Do you think Rebecca would've reacted as she did to Larry's revelation about the exhibits if they'd known

each other longer? Why or why not? Why is it important that we build a track record of trustworthiness with people?

**9** The measure of one's greatness is a central theme. How do you think the filmmakers would define greatness? How would you define it? What makes a man great in God's eyes? (See Matt. 23:11-12 and Luke 9:46-48.)

**10** Teddy acts like the real Roosevelt, but later admits he's just a wax counterfeit. Similarly waxy are some of his nuggets of "wisdom" to Larry. Dissect the statements "A man must look inward to find his own answers" and, in reference to the monkey, "Without him there is no us. ... Who's evolved?" Why is this advice fundamentally flawed?

## Follow-Up Activity

- This \$248 million blockbuster caused a surge in attendance at museums across America. Some, including New York's Museum of Natural History, even sponsored overnight excursions. Maybe a visit to a museum of natural history would be a good

follow-up date or a fun outing for the whole family. Compare the exhibits with those you saw in the film, and imagine the challenges they might create if *they* came to life.

- If, while discussing Talking

Point No. 1, historical figures in the movie proved intriguing, each of you could spend an hour or so doing a little independent research about a favorite, either online or at the library. Then go out for a bite to eat and share what you learned, just the two of you.

## Just for Fun

"I felt a connection when I entered this office," Larry tells the lady at the employment agency. As well he should. The actress with the deadpan expression is Ben Stiller's real-life mom, Anne Meara. Although Meara has appeared in a couple of Stiller's earlier films, *Night at the Museum* marks the first time they've performed a scene together.

—by Bob Smithouser

A **plugged** in Resource

If you and your teen love watching good movies and would enjoy more relationship-building date nights like this one, be sure to request **MOVIE NIGHTS** or **MOVIE NIGHTS FOR TEENS**. Just contact Focus on the Family at 800-232-6459 (in Canada, 800-661-9800).

