I was reading my copy of J. R. R. Tolkien’s “The Hobbit” last month.

One of my friends saw this. He pointed at the book and said; “Aaaah, Have they already printed the book?”

Quite confused, I asked; “What?”

He says; “Well you know, after the movie? They have printed the book, right? You have seen the movie haven’t you?”

My expression was more or less *make :-O face*

(Toastmaster, my dear toastmasters)

I had to explain that “The Hobbit” was written in the 1930s and the movie in-fact came after the book not before!

As you know more and more books are being converted into movies and TV series each year. The new generations are becoming more and more oblivious to the written word. As Jonathan Franzen said, “For every reader who dies today, a viewer is born, and we seem to be witnessing...the final tipping balance.”

Two camps are being formed; the book camp and the movie camp. And there is tension. One saying about this goes as thus; “How would you know that someone has read the book before the movie came out?”

*pause* “Oh, don’t worry! He will tell you. He. Will. Tell you!”

I am a member of the book camp. I am so fond of reading that I ended up writing some. But obviously, none of them were “best sellers”. As evident by the fact that I am here making this speech instead of being at Hawaii sipping coconut water, handing out autographed books.

Being a member of the book camp does not mean that I have read all the books before watching their movies. In the case of GodFather, first *mimic shooting* I played the game, then watched the mo-*eat popcorn*‐vie and finally *mimic reading* read to book.

So I think I can do a bit of an analysis on the situation.

Choosing between the book and the movie is like the choice that you have to make when you are choosing a boyfriend or a girlfriend.

A movie is like a girlfriend that tells stuff as if you like a kid; “Oh look honey, the hero has blown up the villain’s hideout. Look at those vivid colours. See, see that is called fire. And what you hear is an explosion! Boom! Crash clang wrooooom”. A book is like a girlfriend that tells you from the pen on Wordsworth; “I wandered lonely as a cloud, That floats on high o’er vales and hills, When all at once I saw a crowd, A host of golden daffodils; Beside the lake, beneath the trees, Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.” The rest, the story, you will construct in your own way using what you know about flowers, trees and lakes. Let me ask you which one insulted your intelligence and which one treated you as an individual that has a mind of your own? This is why Edmund Wilson said that “no two persons ever read the same book!”
A book is like a girlfriend that you can take on your “daily adventures” that you can later use as stories for speeches. Let me tell you one such story; one day I was reading a book while travelling on a bus. I was totally buried in the pages. I was frantically turning a page after another. Then a bunch of French girls got onto the bus. How do I know that they were French you ask? I recognized the language when they broke my concentration when they were trying to get seated. But then again I was buried in my book, no, honestly I was buried in my book! Only after the chapter was over did I look up. And then I saw it. The girls that were most close to me were giving me a look that would set fire to water. A look that would send chuck Norris crying like a baby. A look that Hera would give Hercules. And then I realized that it is because I was reading Mein Kampf! Now you’d ask what kind of a girlfriend a movie is. Let me tell you a story about how I watched a movie with my friends; We went to the theatre, bought some tickets, sat in the hall, the darkness fell, the movie started, there was an interval, the movie resumed, then the movie ended. End of story. Why are you looking at me like you expected a punch line or something? There is none! Get the point?

Now you must be wondering if there are no bad things about books. Well, there should be. Otherwise everyone would have been reading books instead of watching movies. The thing is, books need something that makes most people shun relationships. Books need commitment! Sometimes you have to invest months to read a book of which the movie is maybe maximum two-three hours. So in some people’s eyes there isn’t a good enough a return for their investment. I do not think I need to put the girlfriend example here.

But as a book fan, I can assure you that this commitment leads to beauty. The depth and detail that you would get for characters and plot is unparalleled.

Now there is a flipside to what I said so far. I know some people who are not regular readers who have taken up reading because of some movie or a TV series. Harry Potter, Game of Thrones and Lord of the Rings are leading in this aspect.

Finally what I can say is that it should not be a competition. I mean, the written word have been around for 6000 years and movies are but a century old. But one thing is for sure; the saying; “Never judge a book by its cover” will have to be updated as, “Never judge a book by its movie!”

Over to you Toastmaster....