

# The Whale (2022)

## Written by

Samuel D. Hunter

## Directed by

Darren Aronofsky

## Cast

Brendan Fraser

Sadie Sink

Ty Simpkins

Hong Chau

Samantha Morton

Jacey Sink

Sathya Sridharan

*Charlie*

*Ellie*

*Thomas*

*Liz*

*Mary*

*Young Ellie*

*Dan the*

*Pizza Man*



## Trivia

- For the role, Brendan Fraser had to don a heavy prosthetic suit that he wore for hours. He told members of the media in attendance at the Venice International Film Festival, "I developed muscles I did not know I had. I even felt a sense of vertigo at the end of the day when all the appliances were removed. It was like stepping off the dock onto a boat in Venice, that undulating. It gave me appreciation for those whose bodies are similar. You need to be an incredibly strong person, mentally and physically, to inhabit that physical being."
- Following its debut screening at the Venice Film Festival, both the movie and lead actor, Brendan Fraser, were given a six-minute standing ovation. The moment, caught on camera, brought Fraser to tears.
- Charlie is loosely based on author Samuel D. Hunter, who wrote both the eponymous play and this movie adaptation. Like Charlie, Hunter is openly gay, taught expository writing at Rutgers University and battled binge eating disorder. Hunter noted that before he lost almost 130

pounds, check-out girls would barely make an effort to act kindly to him, and people would yell abuse at him on the street. Despite early reservations about revisiting this dark episode in his life, Hunter eventually decided to use his isolating experiences with obesity in his play.

- For the role, Brendan Fraser spent four hours each day being fitted with prosthetics that weighed up to 300 pounds (136 kg). He also consulted with the Obesity Action Coalition and worked with a dance instructor for months before filming began in order to determine how his character would move with the excess weight.
- Young Ellie in the flashback scenes is played by Sadie Sink's little sister, Jacey Sink.
- Charlie often orders food from "Gambino's", an actual Italian restaurant in Moscow, Idaho, where the film is set. Screenwriter Samuel D. Hunter grew up in Moscow.
- Shot in a 4:3 aspect ratio, giving the viewer a confined, boxy atmosphere that mirrors the confines of Charlie's apartment.
- During the end credits, whistles of whales can be heard.
- "The Whale" was the original publishing title for Herman Melville's "Moby Dick", referenced in the movie.
- Ellie's three-line essay with 17 phonetic units - 'This apartment smells. / This notebook is retarded. / I hate everyone.' - is a senryu, a piece of Japanese form of short poetry, similar to a haiku, but without seasonal reference, and more cynical in its tone, often emphasizing on human foibles. One can even see Charlie counting 5-7-5 syllables on his fingers while reading the lines of the essay.
- The online teaching element ended up being topical in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, but the film is set in 2016, before the pandemic.
- Charlie uses a harpoon-shaped tool to turn off the light; harpoons were used to hunt whales.