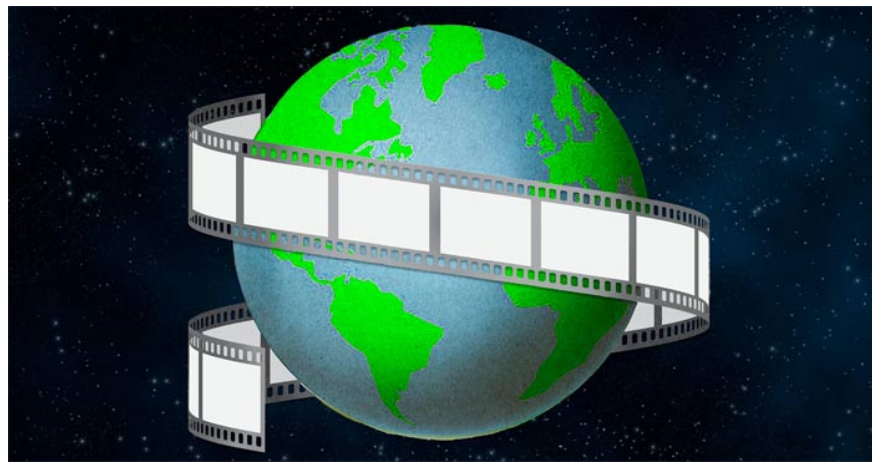


# Movies that changed the world in amazing ways

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It's easy to dismiss movies as mere entertainment, but sometimes summer blockbusters, Oscar contenders , or little-known indies lead to major changes in the way the world works. These developments can be surprising, even disappointing, to filmmakers who were just trying to create a compelling story. Steven Spielberg has expressed regret over his potential role in the "Jaws effect," the widespread irrational fear of sharks that followed the success of Jaws (1975). Experts say the film led to an increase in commercial fishing, and according to the Smithsonian Institution, the number of large sharks in the waters off North America declined by about 50 percent in the years following Jaws' release.

Let's take a look at some other movies that have made tangible changes to our world in strange and unexpected ways.

## **The China Syndrome - The China Syndrome (1979)**

Released on March 16, 1979, this political thriller about safety issues at nuclear power plants seemed prescient when the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor in Pennsylvania melted down just 12 days later. It remains the worst

nuclear accident in U.S. history, although there were no fatalities.

The China Syndrome movie coincided with the Three Mile Island incident, which completely alienated public opinion from nuclear power, and the construction of new nuclear power plants was virtually halted for more than 30 years.

### **Rosemary's Baby - Rosemary's Baby (1968)**

The depiction of Satanism in *Rosemary's Baby* began a long-running trend of Catholic-themed horror films—and the erotic imagery that director Roman Polanski created, based on the novel by Ira Levin, also entered the public consciousness as a legitimate practice for devil worshipers. This became clear more than two decades later, during the Satanic panic of the 1980s, when depictions of alleged Satanic ritual abuse closely resembled Hollywood's version of events.

One particular case of Satanic panic: the McMartin Nursery School abuse trial—in which parents accused nursery staff of sexually abusing children and performing Satanic rituals, including levitating while dressed as witches—was actually two seven-year, \$15 million trials, making it the longest and most expensive criminal trial in U.S. history. No verdicts were ever reached, and experts today generally agree that the allegations were unfounded.

### **Silence of the Lambs - Silence of the Lambs (1991)**

Considered by some to be the most influential film of the past 40 years, *The Silence of the Lambs* ushered in a new wave of hard-boiled crime dramas and thrillers, many of which featured strong female characters (*The Files* is one show that was directly inspired by the film). The popularity of this type of media—where the protagonists are law enforcement officers who almost always catch the bad guys—has had a profound impact on our culture's view of policing and police brutality.

### **Field of Dreams - Field of Dreams (1989)**

'*Build it, they will come*' has become a cliché over the years - but state governments have taken this advice literally. Starting with the construction of Camden Yards in Baltimore in 1992, *Field of Dreams* sparked a \$9 billion taxpayer-funded 25-stadium construction boom.

These stadiums, along with the public money policymakers who built them, might promise a return to a simpler, more baseball-centric era—just as Kevin Costner's character walks into his dream stadium. Instead, public money and nostalgia are often turned into private profit. Tax-subsidized stadiums often fail to generate enough revenue to offset the public investment in building them.

### **Victim - Victim (1961)**

Homosexuality was under heavy scrutiny in the UK when this British horror film was released, and its lead actor, Dirk Bogarde, lost his iconic status after its release. The story revolves around a married lawyer who takes on blackmailers. The plot was controversial, but it portrayed a common phenomenon in the UK's gay community.

The censorship board gave Victim an X rating because of its use of the word "homosexual", but some believe this helped hasten the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Britain. Lord Arran, who introduced the bill into parliament, wrote a letter thanking Bogarde for her courage in appearing in the film.

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