



Coriolanus

Spring
Season
2012

Release: 2011

Cert (UK): 15

Runtime: 123 mins

Directors: Ralph Fiennes

Cast: Ralph Fiennes, Gerard Butler, Vanessa Redgrave, Brian Cox, Jessica Chastain

For those of us who have not seen Shakespeare's play 'Coriolanus', the story is set in a Rome beset by food shortages, civil unrest and uprisings, one of which – the



Volscians – is put down by our 'hero', the proud and short tempered Caius Martius, in their city of Corioles, earning him the name of Coriolanus. He returns to Rome to stand for the role of Consul, a role he doesn't really want, but considers himself obviously worthy of, egged on by his ambitious mother. Unfortunately for him, the Patricians, who agree to his selection don't

have a full say in this; he has to get the people to agree too and they, lead on by their Tribunes, don't like him...What follows is classic Shakespearian switching rivalries and battles, which I will leave you to enjoy.

Ralph Fiennes, in his directorial debut, makes a fine job of transferring the setting to a modern day Balkan state, making the whole story come to life for us as a modern battle between democracy and autocracy – we see the fighting in the streets, reminding us of Serbia, or even the present Arab Spring, especially with Coriolanus' disdainful canvassing of the people. Fiennes uses Newsreels to cleverly hold the plot together and keep us up to date with the background story.



There are some fine performances from Fiennes himself as Coriolanus, Gerard Butler as the leader of the Volscians, Brian Cox as the more liberal minded Patrician Menenius Agrippa and, especially, Vanessa Redgrave as Coriolanus' mother. You may not be quite so certain of the worthiness of John Snow on the newsreels...but it will give us something to argue about afterwards! Not a version of the play for purists, but a modern version which Fiennes has turned

into a thriller, whilst still leaving the underlying story to speak for Shakespeare.