

Aging on Film

<u>Title/Cast</u>	<u>Description</u>
<p><u>Age-Old Friends</u> (1989) Cast: Hume Cronyn Vincent Gardenia</p>	<p>Two men cope with their changing lives and identities in a long-term care facility. The film looks at the day-to-day existence of John Cooper and his friend in an upper-crust retirement home. His sharp wit and sarcasm have managed to distance him from his daughter and her family, but ultimately help him to cope with challenges of aging, including his friend's dementia. More lighthearted than it sounds.</p>
<p><u>After Life</u> (1998) Japan</p>	<p>Set in a way station where people go after they die, the intriguing concept is that the dead must choose an important segment of their life and film it to take with them into the afterlife. The story revolves around a counselor, Takashi, who is assigned to help an old man called Ichiro. Their interaction causes Takashi to re-examine his own life. The film is a moving examination of the meaning of our lives.</p>
<p><u>The Ballad of Narayama</u> (1983) Japan</p>	<p>The Ballad of Narayama is based on a Japanese legend. A century ago in a remote mountain village, custom dictates that villagers reaching age 70 are taken to Mount Narayama to die. The film is an affirmation of family, life, and death. The film was winner of the Grand Prize at the 1983 Cannes Film Festival. (Japanese with English subtitles)</p>
<p><u>Away From Her</u> (2006) Canada Cast: Gordon Pinsent Julie Christie</p>	<p>A retired academic deals with his relationship with his wife, who has Alzheimer's disease. He is particularly haunted by his infidelity and when she transfers her attention to another resident in her nursing home, he is forced to re-examine their relationship.</p>
<p><u>Antonia's Line</u> (1995) <i>Holland</i> Cast: Willeke van Ammelrooy</p>	<p>Antonia, the elderly matriarch of the family announces that she is going to die that day. The film recounts her life in the 40 years after the Second World War. Winner of the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar in 1996.</p>
<p><u>Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman</u> (1974) Cast: Cicely Tyson Michael Murphy.</p>	<p>Miss Jane Pitman, a 110-year old former slave, reviews her life for a young print journalist. Miss Jane also is inspired by the young people of her community who are involved in the Civil Rights struggle and despite her age becomes involved in a climactic final scene of protest.</p>
<p><u>Babette's Feast</u> (1987)</p>	<p>Based on a tale by Karen Blixen, the film tells the story of a remote village where two elderly sisters, Martina and Phillipa, have lived a quiet life devoted to the stern religious community developed by the father many years ago. Babette, a refugee from Paris, has worked for them for 14 years. Her presence is felt in the tiny community by her good works and wonderful cooking. When Babette wins the Paris lottery she uses the money to purchase the food required to make a fabulous French dinner and serves it to the sisters and members of the dwindling religious community. The old people experience an epicurean evening before resuming their austere, simple ways.</p>

<p><u>Cocoon (1985)</u></p> <p>Cast: Wilford Brimley Hume Cronyn Jessica Tandy Don Ameche</p>	<p>A group of elderly residents of a retirement community discover that aliens are nurturing a rejuvenating life force in the water of a swimming pool. The older people face a major dilemma as they decide whether or not to accept an invitation to travel to a new world, where "we'll never be sick, we'll never get any older, and we'll never die." Ameche won an Oscar for his role.</p>
<p><u>Cinema Paradiso (1990)</u></p> <p>Cast: Phillipe Noiret.</p>	<p>A middle-aged film producer, Salvatore, recalls his life as a child in post-World-War II Italy. He remembers his friendship with an old man, the town's cinema projectionist, and this man's influence on his life. The older projectionist is a surrogate father to the boy, whose own father has been killed fighting on the Russian Front. When Salvatore is an adolescent, Alfredo continues to advise him and urges him to escape the confines of the small town and establish his independence. Salvatore finally appreciates this intergenerational relationship in his own middle age.</p>
<p><u>Dad (1989)</u></p> <p>Cast: Jack Lemmon Ted Danson Olympia Dukakis Ethan Hawke.</p>	<p>The film depicts an adult son whose distant relationship to his parents is changed when the mother has a heart attack. The son helps his father to become engaged in life, despite the objections of the mother, who preferred her husband to be meek and submissive. Eventually the father faces a life-threatening cancer, and the son's relationship with his father is followed to the end of the old man's illness.</p>
<p><u>Driving Miss Daisy (1989)</u></p> <p>Cast: Morgan Freeman Jessica Tandy Dan Aykroyd</p>	<p>An old woman, the wealthy widow of an Atlanta businessman, is forced to hire a chauffeur when her son makes her give up driving due to age. After her initial hostility toward the chauffeur, played by Morgan Freeman, she eventually accepts him as an integral part of her life. After a relationship that spans 25 years, she declares him to be her best friend.</p>
<p><u>The Dresser (1983)</u></p> <p>Cast: Albert Finney Tom Courtenay</p>	<p>An aging Shakespearean actor and his bedraggled troupe perform during World War II in England. The relationship between him and his dresser, Norman, is the focus of the film. The dresser becomes the old actor's nursemaid, counselor, and confidant. The old man's death at the end of the film leaves Norman feeling abandoned.</p>
<p><u>Fried Green Tomatoes (1991)</u></p> <p>Cast: Jessica Tandy Kathy Bates Mary Stuart Masterson Mary-Louise Parker Cicely Tyson</p>	<p>Based on the novel by Fannie Flagg. Jessica Tandy plays an old woman in nursing home befriended by a timid, overweight, middle-aged woman named Evelyn. The old woman begins to tell her a story of events in the life of people from Whistle Stop, Georgia. Evelyn, struggling to reawaken love in her marriage, and striving to increase her self-esteem in middle age, gains strength and self-confidence by listening to the stories. The old woman finds someone to whom she can tell the story of her own life and to pass on the values of her generation to a new one.</p>
<p><u>Going in Style (1979)</u></p> <p>Cast: George Burns Art Carney Lee Strasberg</p>	<p>Three old men spend their days in New York City talking on park benches. One day, one of them decides it is time to integrate back into life – by robbing a bank, which they pull off successfully. Two of the three men die in their sleep, but not before each has tasted life again. The third old man is eventually caught but is content to live out his days in prison.</p>

<p><u>Harold and Maude (1971)</u></p> <p>Cast: Ruth Gordon Bud Cort</p>	<p>An eccentric 79-year old woman befriends a lonely, confused 20-year old son of a rich Los Angeles family. Harold is obsessed with death and loves to attend funerals and perform suicides attempts – all to get his mother's attention. The old woman, Maude, becomes his mentor, friend, companion, and lover. Her goal becomes clear, to help Harold establish his own identity, and allow him to go out into the world and love others.</p>
<p><u>Harry and Tonto (1974)</u></p> <p>Cast: Art Carney Ellen Burstyn</p>	<p>An old man, evicted from his apartment in New York City, moves in with his son and family on Long Island, and then escapes to the road with his orange cat, Tonto.</p>
<p><u>The Gin Game (1984)</u></p> <p>Cast: Jessica Tandy Hume Cronyn</p>	<p>This filmed version of the Broadway stage play deals with the relationship that develops between an elderly man and woman in a care home as they meet to play gin. It starts lightly as we watch the old man's reaction to consistently losing. The mood shifts as we begin to see what losing means to Cronyn's character in this setting at the end of his life.</p>
<p><u>I Never Sang for My Father (1970)</u></p> <p>Cast: Melvin Douglas Gene Hackman</p>	<p>This film portrays the complexities of the relationship between a domineering father and his middle-aged son, who yearns for his father's love while trying to establish his own independence. The latter half deals with the issues of caring for aging parents and institutionalization. The film highlights that relationships often survive the deaths of loved ones as survivors continue to consider the meaning of the relationship.</p>
<p><u>Innocence (2001)</u> Australia</p> <p>Cast: Julia Blake Charles Ting</p>	<p>Directed by Paul Cox (“A Woman’s Tale”), it centers on reignited love between two people who were lovers in Belgium as teenagers and who discover each other in their late 60’s in Australia. Claire is in a staid marriage that “will see her out” while Andreas is a widower. As Roger Ebert noted, the version of love depicted is not the “sentimental version of love for the twilight years,” but is “passionate, demanding, forgiving, accepting love.” Their passion has a great impact on their families and friends who depend upon them to remain predictable. The film deals with issues of modesty, disappointment, betrayal, fear, and desire.</p>
<p><u>Iris (2001)</u></p> <p>Cast: Judi Dench, Jim Broadbent Kate Winslet</p>	<p>The focus of this excellent movie is based on the life of the English author, Iris Murdoch (Kate Winslet and Judi Dench). The toll taken by Alzheimer’s disease upon Murdoch’s brilliant mind, her devoted husband, and their loving relationship is honestly portrayed. A scene where Iris is lost and wandering highlights the great strain on a caregiver for someone with dementia.</p>
<p><u>In The Company of Strangers (1991)</u> Canada</p>	<p>Cynthia Scott directed this story of eight radically different women (e.g., a Mohawk, a nun, a talented blues singer, a literary lesbian, iconoclastic free-thinker) who are stranded in the Quebec countryside when their bus breaks down. This metaphoric film does a great job showing how they use their differences to meet their common needs as aging women. All of the women play themselves and much of the interaction is spontaneous. Slow paced but fulfilling.</p>

<p><u>Kotch</u> (1971)</p> <p>Cast: Walter Matthau</p>	<p>An irascible old man, Joe Kotcher, lives with his son and his wife and provides superb day-care for his grandson. The daughter-in-law resents his presence and he takes a long bus trip to consider his options. When he returns to Los Angeles and realizes he is no longer wanted in their house, he moves to Palm Springs in order to check on the progress of Erica, a high school student who was a former babysitter for the family. Eventually the young woman moves in with Kotch, they share their life stories. After Erica leaves, Kotch settles in to a fulfilling old age.</p>
<p><u>Madame Rosa</u> (1978)</p> <p>Cast: Simone Signoret</p>	<p>A former prostitute, now in her 60s, is a nursemaid for various children of prostitutes and other abandoned children in a Paris flat. Her favorite child is Momo, short for Mohammed, an Arab boy (eleven years old) dropped off by his parents eleven years ago. The flat is a community of sorts, and Madame Rosa is respected as the heart and soul of that community. Now in failing health, she hangs on to the dwindling number of her charges, tries to find homes for them, and struggles to protect Momo from life on the street.</p>
<p><u>Madame Sousatzka</u> (1988)</p> <p>Cast: Shirley MacLaine Peggy Ashcroft Navin Chowdhry</p>	<p>An eccentric piano teacher in London, daughter of a famous pianist, takes on a new pupil – a young Bengali immigrant, whose mother hopes he will become a famous concert pianist someday.</p>
<p><u>On Golden Pond</u> (1981)</p> <p>Cast: Katherine Hepburn Henry Fonda Jane Fonda</p>	<p>An adult daughter, who never resolved feelings of inadequacy around her father, visits her parents' summer home in Maine to introduce them to her future husband (her second marriage). She and her fiancé travel for a month and leave the man's thirteen-year old son with her parents.</p>
<p><u>The Postman [Il Postino]</u> (1995)</p> <p>Cast: Phillipe Noiret Massimo Troisi</p>	<p>An illiterate postman on a remote island off Italy is befriended by the legendary poet Pablo Neruda during the poet's exile from his native Chile. Neruda becomes the young man's guide and mentor and helps the younger man to become a poet. The postman is able to find his own voice and to express his yearnings, and to risk failure to achieve happiness.</p>
<p><u>Ran</u> (1985) Japan</p>	<p>Akira Kurosawa's film version of Shakespeare's King Lear. The story tells of the downfall of the patriarch of a powerful clan when he decides to give up his kingdom to his sons. Like Lear, he ends up alone on a Japanese heath. It features fantastic battle scenes and powerful use of colour. (Academy Award for Best Costumes)</p>
<p><u>Red</u> (1994)</p> <p>Cast: Irene Jacob Jean-Louis Trintignant</p>	<p>The third of three films based on the symbolism of the French Tricolour – Blue, White, and Red. A young model in Geneva, Switzerland, befriends a retired judge, who has retreated to his house and eavesdrops on his neighbors for recreation. When the judge turns himself in to the police, the young model returns to explore the significance of their friendship. Their friendship stimulates him to terminate his retreat from society and reconnect himself to society. His advice helps her avoid negative relationships and find happiness in a new life abroad.</p>

<p><u>The Straight Story</u> (1999)</p> <p>Cast: Richard Farnsworth Sissy Spacek</p>	<p>Based on a true account, film by David Lynch tells the story of 73-year old Alvin Straight, who drove his 1966 John Deere lawnmower 240 miles from Iowa to Wisconsin to visit his estranged and ailing brother. Filmed along the actual route taken by Straight, the journey is related in a series of encounters, highlighted by warmth, humor, fear, courage, and caring. Farnsworth's portrayal of Straight earned him an Oscar nomination for best actor.</p>
<p><u>Tatie Danielle</u> (1990) France</p>	<p>Tatie Danielle is nasty to all around her and even to her pet. While very funny, Tatie's unrelenting manipulative and deceitful behavior has a dark edge. The film offers layered questions e.g., "should I be laughing at this film?", "am I laughing because I'm buying into a negative stereotype?" (French with English subtitles)</p>
<p><u>That's Life</u> (1986)</p> <p>Cast: Jack Lemmon Julie Andrews</p>	<p>Jack Lemmon plays a wealthy architect turning 60. Preoccupied with his own concerns about growing older, he is oblivious to the concerns of his wife who is awaiting results from health tests. While this is going on, their children return home to present the parents with all their challenges. This is a feel-good film that deals with transitions to adulthood and to old age; it is light but doesn't trivialize the concerns of the characters.</p>
<p><u>The Trip to Bountiful</u> (1985)</p> <p>Cast: Geraldine Paige</p>	<p>A sensitive and powerful portrayal of an old woman's desire to visit the home of her childhood in the rural Texas town of Bountiful. The tale unfolds in three acts; her unhappy life with her son and daughter-in-law, her "escape", and her return to her original home in Bountiful. The restorative confrontation of past and present in Bountiful is what makes this a superb film on aging. Paige received an Oscar for her portrayal.</p>
<p><u>The Sunshine Boys</u> (1975)</p> <p>Cast: Walter Matthau George Burns Richard Benjamin</p>	<p>Two former vaudevillians, Al Lewis and Willie Clark, are reunited for a television retrospective of comedy. Willie's nephew works hard to unite the aged team and eventually is rewarded when his uncle begins to treat him like a member of his family.</p>
<p><u>Tell Me a Riddle</u> (1980)</p> <p>Cast: Melvyn Douglas Lila Kedrova Karen Allen.</p>	<p>The film portrays an old couple, estranged in their old age; the husband wanting to retreat to an old people's home and the wife retreating to memories of her political coming of age as a teenager in Russia. When the wife is diagnosed with cancer, the couple visits their children and end up in San Francisco, where they are taken in by a grandchild.</p>
<p><u>Whales of August</u> (1987)</p> <p>Cast : Lillian Gish Bette Davis</p>	<p>Two sisters spend a summer at a seaside house in Maine. They recall their rivalries and relationship as younger women. They have experienced aging differently and this adds to the tensions in their relationship. Vincent Price surprisingly plays a love interest.</p>
<p><u>Wild Strawberries</u> (1957) Sweden</p>	<p>This classic Ingmar Bergman film focuses on the reminiscences and dreams of an elderly man as he travels to Lund to receive a prestigious award for his lifetime service as a physician. The journey brings self-revelations that are disturbing as well as pleasant, forcing a realization that there is integrity "in this chain of unexpected, entangled events." Swedish with English subtitles</p>

<p><u>A Woman's Tale (1992)</u> Australia</p> <p>Cast: Sheila Florence</p>	<p>A beautiful film (directed by Paul Cox) about an old woman who exemplifies integrity and hope in the face of death. Rich and honest in depiction of her relations with family and friends. The lead actress, who was herself dying of cancer when she made this film, won the Australian Academy Award for her portrayal. Her performance has been described as one of the bravest ever filmed.</p>
<p><u>Waking Ned Devine (1999)</u> Ireland</p> <p>Cast: Ian Bannen, Fionnula Flanagan, David Kelly</p>	<p>Commercial director Kirk Jones makes his feature directing debut with a story about a small town in Ireland called Tulaigh More, where one of their 52 inhabitants wins the lotto jackpot of nearly seven million pounds. When nobody claims it, the town goes on a search to find out why. They find the winner, old Ned Devine, dead -- a smile on his face, clutching the winning ticket. What ensues is a community coming together in hopes of getting his money to split 51 ways. What they learn is the importance of friendship and the true value of money.</p>