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Mr. Holland's Opus. Hollywood Pictures.

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If you are a teacher, or ever had a teacher that touched your life, then the movie <cite>Mr. Holland's Opus</cite>, is for you. Richard Dreyfuss is masterful as a music teacher who begins a mediocre career in the mid-1960s, and through certain influences and experiences in his professional and personal relationships, becomes a passionate educator who learns how to balance his life as a teacher and a father. <p> The film brings together the gamut of emotions, for me–as a student who has had memorable teachers, as a teacher who has had memorable students, and as a husband and father who has had to learn the hard way how to find time to be the best possible teacher while living up to expectations of loving husband and father. The character of Mr. Holland is first and formost a musician And while he is teaching to earn money, he is also working on a symphony. As he discovers that he can use rock-and-roll to wake up his sleepy students, he falls in love with teaching. In the meantime, his wife gives birth to a son, who we later find out, is deaf. The boy's deafness is devastating to the music teacher-dad, who now identifies with the deaf composer Beethoven, who, like his son, could never experience symphonies so carefully composed. <p> I identified with the movie's characters in so many ways that I cried. I cried hard. After the son, Coltrain Gershwin Holland, is born, Dreyfuss' character places headphones on this pregnant wife's belly to instill a love of music in his unborn child. I did that (I'll admit it, but only to you). Mr. Holland feels the frustration of teaching unmotivated students, and the thrill of living when he reaches one student by some innovative technique. <p> Watching Mr. Holland makes the teacher in me want to run into work on Monday, shake everybody's hand, and do the best damn job I possibly can. <p> The movie takes us through three decades, much like <cite>Forrest Gump</cite>, as we watch Dreyfuss' character gracefully age, and in the end, fight the good fight against school-board budget cutters. Be ready with the kleenxes when Mr. Holland sings John Lennon's <cite>Beautiful Boy</cite> to his deaf son, with whom he has had a tulmutuous relationship due to a preoccupation with his work and the division caused by the son's deafness. I won't tell you how it ends, but my kleenex had been through the ringer, by the time the closing credits rolled. And the soundtrack will move you to tears, if not goosebumps, just by itself. <p> Go see it. And if you teach, tell your students to see it in about twenty years when they can really appreciate it. <p>

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