**The Best Years of Our Lives Encyclopedia Article**

**The Best Years of Our Lives by William Wyler**

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**The Best Years of Our Lives**

A 1946 film that perfectly captures the bittersweet sense of post-World War II American society, *The Best Years of Our Lives* examines three war veterans as they adjust to new stateside roles. Former sergeant Al Stephenson (Fredric March), disillusioned with his banking career, develops a drinking problem but learns to control it with the support of his wife Milly (Myrna Loy) and adult daughter Peggy (Teresa Wright). Fred Derry (Dana Andrews), one-time soda jerk and bombadier, finds that his wartime skills are now useless and eventually leaves his self-centered wife Marie (Virginia Mayo) for Peggy. Homer Parrish (Harold Russell), an ex-sailor who lost his hands in a shipboard accident, learns to deal with the rudeness of well-meaning civilians and shapes a new life with his fiancée Wilma (Cathy O'Donnell). A much-honored film (it won eight Oscars, including Best Picture), *Best Years* is a beautiful, simple, and eloquent evocation of postwar America.

**Further Reading:**

Anderegg, Michael A. *William Wyler.* Boston, Twayne, 1979.

Gerber, David A. "Heroes and Misfits: The Troubled Social Reintegration of Disabled Veterans in *The Best Years of Our Lives.* " *American Quarterly.* Vol. 24, No. 4, 1994, 545-74.

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Norden, Martin F. *The Cinema of Isolation: A History of Physical Disability in the Movies.* New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1994.