

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 bombardier, 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:

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