

Some thoughts on watching films

Stories are the stuff of life. They allow us to reflect on all sorts of issues at a safe distance as we engage with the characters, cry with them, laugh with them, get cross with them and generally share their experience. How they deal with the issues they come across may frustrate us, or give us new insights; cause us to laugh or cry; result in us hurling abuse at the screen or willing there to be a happy ending. And through it all we can encounter God in all sorts of unexpected places if we only take time to look.

Questions to ask yourself

What did you think of the film? What do you like most? Least?

Which incidents made you *think* or *feel* most strongly? How well did you think the film treated those incidents?

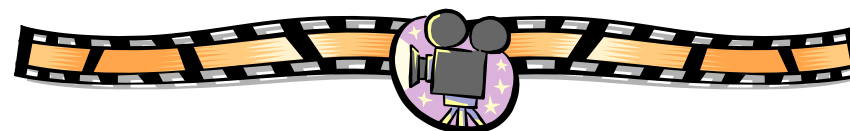
What issues did the film raise for you?

What character(s) do you most identify with and why?

Does the film have any echoes of Christian beliefs or stories from the Bible? Does it support or challenge Christian values?

Some facts about the film

- The film is based on a novel by Shi Bao called *Remembrance*.
- The film was made in 1999 with the Chinese title *Wo de fu qin mu qin*, which literally means "My Father and Mother".
- It won the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2000 and the Audience Award for World Cinema at the Sundance Film Festival in 2001.
- Yimou Zhang is a well-known and prolific Chinese film director with films including *Red Sorghum*, *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers*. He has two BAFTA film awards to his credit. One of Zhang's recurrent themes is a celebration of the resilience, even the stubbornness, of Chinese people in the face of hardships and adversities. His works are also particularly known for their use of colour.
- Alongside co-director and choreographer Zhang Jigang, he directed both the opening and closing ceremonies for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.
- Yimou Zhang was 16 when the Cultural Revolution erupted in 1966. He was forced to suspend studying and worked, first as a farm hand, and then, for seven years, as a labourer in a cotton textile mill. During this time he took up painting and amateur still photography. He had to sell his blood for five months to get enough money to purchase his first camera when he was 18.
- The young woman is played by Zhang Ziyi. *The Road Home* was her film debut but she has since gone on to be an extremely accomplished actress, starring in such films as *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *House of Flying Daggers* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.



**A chance to watch films together.
An opportunity to discuss the issues raised.
A time of friendship, food and fun.**

6th Jun	<u>Aspects of Love IV: The Road Home</u>
4th Jul	Aspects of Love V: I've Loved You So Long
1st Aug	Up
5th Sep	Doubt
10th Oct	The Soloist
7th Nov	The Reader
5th Dec	TBA

**Films start at 5:30pm
Followed by food, coffee and conversation**

**10 Bletchingdon Road
Islip**

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The Road Home

The Road Home is a simple, yet charming, love story set in 1950s rural China. It tells the story of a young woman's love for the newly arrived school teacher, and of their courtship. In so doing, it speaks of how love can break the walls of tradition, compel us to do all sorts of things others may see as strange, as well as sustain us through difficult circumstances.

The film itself is beautifully made and reverses usual cinematic tradition by portraying the current day story in black and white and the historical story in glorious colour.

Love against adversity

The love the young girl has for the teacher is evident from the start, yet there are many things in the way before that love can be fully realised. First she has to be noticed, and then there is the question of him being of a different class. Marriages were normally arranged and to express one's love freely was simply not done. And then the teacher returns to the city and she does not know if he will ever return.

What do you think of Di's determination and the reaction of those around her? What about your own experiences? Has love been a struggle or been relatively straightforward? How resilient might you have been had you been in Di's position?

Tradition—The Road Home

It is very important for the old Zhao Di for the body of her husband to be carried back to the village. It is the last thing she can do for him and she wants it done properly, in the way it has been carried out for many centuries. How important for you is tradition? What about rituals surrounding death? How important is it for you that things will be done "properly" should your partner/parent/child die? And what does "properly" mean for you?

The importance of little things

In any relationship, the smallest of things can take on enormous importance. For Zhao Di it is the hairclip which the teacher gives her. Because of its associations it becomes very precious and she is devastated when it gets lost. What things in your life are important? Have you ever lost something of great sentimental value? What did you do to try and get it back?

Grandma

Grandma, although nearly blind, is very aware of all that goes on around her and "sees" things very clearly, particularly the unexpressed emotions of Zhao Di. She goes to great lengths to ensure the pot is mended, another symbol of the love Di has for the teacher, and thus allow Di to hold that memory in a positive way, rather than through something which is broken. Has there been a "grandma" figure in your life? Or have you been able to play such a role for someone else?

Expectations

Towards the end of the film, the old Zhao Di tells her son of how his father longed for him to be a teacher. There is a very real sense of disappointment and almost emo-

Memorable Quotes

Son When I was young, my mother told me my father had a beautiful voice. My mother is illiterate. She didn't understand the text. But she couldn't resist my father's voice. ... For forty years she went to listen. It became part of her life.

Son Arranged marriages were the norm back then. Mother was the first to express her love freely.

Son The road is a part of their love story. This is a dirt road that leads to the city from our village. My mother had waited for my father on this road with love and trust for many years. So she wants to walk this road with him for the last time.

Zhao Di I'll be waiting.

Old Zhao Di He always wanted you to become a teacher, to take over for him. You went to a teacher's college but you never taught a day of class. If you could have taught even for one day, you would have fulfilled his dream. Then you could have gone back to your life.

tional blackmail as she then goes on to talk of the difficulty all parents experience in letting their children leave home and go to the big city. What do you think of the son's response? How do we encourage and enable our offspring to become the people God meant them to be, rather than perhaps the people we want them to be? And what happens if we genuinely think that they are heading in the wrong direction and God is calling us to gently put them straight?

The voice

Di falls in love with the teacher's voice and day after day passes by the school so that, although she is illiterate, she can listen to him teaching. What voices are there in your life that you enjoy listening to? Is it what they say or the way they say it that is important to you? What about God's voice?

Community

Life in 1950s rural China very much revolved around the community. Everyone gets together to build the school, the men doing the work, the women providing the food. What lessons might we learn for community living today? How do we encourage that sense of a community belonging and working together?