



“F” Word Films

Reading stories can be personally entertaining and if by chance someone else has read the same story, you can share your insights about it. Watching stories can be solitary, but it really lends itself to a communal bowl of fresh popcorn and shared insights about what we have just experienced together. At the peaceCENTER we call this *Popcorn Peacemaking*. Watching a film together as a family or with friends and sharing not only the Milk Duds, but also how the movie affects each person, adds to the richness of the experience.

With this in mind I have selected some of my favorite “F” word films that have helped me to travel to different places and to remember that we are all a part of the human family and express our shared feelings in different languages and customs. Forgiveness is an affair of the heart, remembering what makes us more human can only increase the good will that seems to be in such short supply. So silence your cell phones and enjoy the film...together.



Atonement

2008, Keira Knightly & James McAvoy

When Briony Tallis, 13 years old and an aspiring writer, sees her older sister Cecilia and Robbie Turner at the fountain in front of the family estate she misinterprets what is happening thus setting into motion a series of misunderstandings and a childish pique that will have lasting repercussions for all of them.

Babette's Feast

1988, Stephan Audan

In 19th century Denmark, two beautiful sisters live in an isolated village with their father, who is the honored pastor of a

strict, small Protestant church. Although they are each presented with a real opportunity to leave the tiny village, the sisters choose to stay with their father, to serve to him and their church. Some years after his death, a French Catholic refugee, Babette, arrives at their door, begs them to take her in, and commits herself to work for them as maid/housekeeper/cook. After many years the sisters decide to hold a dinner to commemorate the 100th anniversary of their father's birth. Babette experiences unexpected good fortune and implores the sisters to allow her to take charge of the preparation of the celebration. From the novel by Karen Blixen, the exotic meal transforms the members of the tiny church just as this gorgeous film transforms all who partake of Babette's Feast.

Beaches

1988, Bette Midler & Barbara Hershey

When the New York child performer CC Bloom and San Francisco rich kid Hillary meet in a holiday resort in Atlantic City, it marks the start of a lifetime friendship between them. The two keep in touch through letters for a number of years until Hillary, now a successful lawyer, moves to New York to stay with struggling singer CC. The movie shows the various stages of their friendship and their romances, including their love for the same man.

Blow Dry

2001, Alan Rickman

When the tiny burgh of Keighley lands the rights to host the annual British hairdressing championships, practically every city in the United Kingdom is represented in the competition — except Keighley itself. It seems the event is team-oriented, and the only suitable local contestants had a huge falling out a decade ago. For Brian, the son of two hairdressers, that falling out had personal consequences: His mother, Shelley, left his father, Phil, to take up with Phil's hair model, Sandra, former styling champ. Phil has settled for training Brian to help run his lowly barber shop, while Shelley and Sandra have opened a salon of their own. But when Shelley learns that she has terminal cancer, she reaches out to her family in hopes that a reunion for the hairdressing contest might help them all find some sense of closure.

Chocolat

1997, Juliette Binoche & Judi Dench

Vianne Rocher and her young daughter are strangers who are met with skepticism and resistance when they move to a conservative village in rural France and open a chocolate shop during Lent. As Vianne begins to work her magic and help those around her, the townspeople are soon won over by her exuberance and her delicious chocolates - except for the mayor, who is determined to shut her down. When a group of river drifters visit the town, Vianne teaches the townspeople something about acceptance and finds love along the way.

Cinema Paradiso

1990, Phillippe Noiret

A boy who grew up in a Sicilian Village returns home as a famous director after receiving news about the death of his old friend, Alfredo. Told in a flashback, Salvatore reminiscences about his childhood and his relationship with Alfredo, the projectionist at Cinema Paradiso. Under the fatherly influence of Alfredo, Salvatore fell in love with film making, with the duo spending many hours discussing films and Alfredo painstakingly teaching Salvatore the skills that became a stepping stone for the young boy into the world of film making. Cinema Paradiso brings the audience through the changes in cinema and the dying trade of traditional film making, editing and screening. It also explores a young boy's dream of leaving his little town to foray into the world outside.

The Color Purple

1985, Danny Glover & Oprah Winfrey

The Color Purple follows the life of Celie Johnson as she struggles through life in the early 1900s. The film begins with Celie, about 17 years old, giving birth to her second child, sired by her father. Her father takes the second child away from her and tells her never to tell anyone about it. Time passes and a local farmer, "Mister", comes by to marry Celie's younger, prettier sister, Nettie. Her father refuses to let Nettie marry and gives the man Celie instead. Meanwhile, Mister's lover comes to visit and befriends Celie, helping her to understand that she is more than

Mister's servant. The movie culminates in Celie leaving Mister with the threat that everything he touches will fall apart until he does right by her. Mister finds compassion and goes to the INS to help Celie's sister Nettie prove that she is a US citizen and return from Africa where she has been living with Celie's two children. Celie is reunited with Nettie and her two children in a heartfelt ending to an extraordinary film.

Crimes and Misdemeanors

1989, Woody Allen, Martin Landau, Claire Bloom, Alan Alda, Anjelica Huston, Sam Waterston, Jerry Orbach & Mia Farrow

An ophthalmologist's mistress threatens to reveal their affair to his wife; his brother suggests a solution to his problem. Meanwhile an unhappily married documentary filmmaker is attracted to another woman in the midst of making a film about a philosopher who he admires. This interesting philosophical exploration of good and evil ends in a moral dilemma.

Dead Man Walking

1997, Susan Sarandon & Sean Penn

Based on the memoir of Sister Helen Prejean, who visited with the convicted murderer, Matthew Poncelet, during the final week before his state-ordered execution. Though inexperienced in criminal chaplaincy, Sister Helen becomes Poncelet's spiritual counselor and connects him with a lawyer, who helps him appeal his conviction with the State Board of Capital Punishment, the Governor of Louisiana, and the State of Louisiana Supreme Court without success. Sister Helen visits the victims' families and listens to their stories of pain, suffering, and anguish. With a tidal wave of opposition and criticism, she helps Matthew come to terms with the responsibility of the murders and rape he has committed.

Enchanted April

1992, Josie Lawrence & Miranda Richardson

Imagine a month in paradise with nothing to do but everything you dreamed of...Lottie and Rose, two married women living in a 1920s London, share the misery of empty relationships with their spouses and decide to rent an Italian villa for the month of April to get away. In order to save money, they advertise for two other women to join them. Mrs. Fisher, an elderly widow who knew many famous authors in her youth and Lady Caroline Dester who

is a gorgeous, young widow who only wants to be left alone... or so she thinks...

The four arrive at Villa San Salvatore on the Italian seaside drenched in wisteria and sunshine, they find themselves in a beauty so enchanting that they experience transformations in themselves they never thought possible. The film is gorgeous, the scenery is breathtaking... no doubt you will want to visit the Italian coast after seeing this film.

The Fourth Wise Man

1985, Alan Arkin & Martin Sheen

Artaban is a young Magus who desires to follow the star to the birthplace of the coming King, against the counsel of his friends and family. Carrying three precious jewels to give to the Messiah, Artaban and his reluctant servant Orontes set off to join the caravan of the three other wise men. They miss the caravan, but Artaban continues his search, always one step behind. Artaban spends much of his remaining wealth and all of his energy helping the poor and unfortunate people he meets, until at the end of his life he finally finds his Messiah.

The Great Debaters

2007, Denzel Washington & Forest Whitaker

Marshall, Texas, described by James Farmer, Jr. as "the last city to surrender after the Civil War," is home to Wiley College, where, in 1935-36, inspired by the Harlem Renaissance and his clandestine work as a union organizer, Professor Melvin Tolson coaches the debate team to a nearly-undefeated season that sees the first debate between U.S. students from white and Negro colleges and ends with an invitation to face Harvard University's national champions. The team of four, which includes a female student and a very young James Farmer, is tested in a crucible heated by Jim Crow, sexism, a lynch mob, an arrest and near riot, a love affair, jealousy, and a national radio audience. Based on actual events.

Invictus

2009, Morgan Freeman & Matt Damon

The film tells the inspiring true story of how Nelson Mandela joined forces with the captain of South Africa's rugby team to help unite their country. Newly elected President Mandela knows his nation remains racially and economically divided in the wake of apartheid. Believing he can bring his people together through the

universal language of sports, Mandela rallies South Africa's rugby team as they make their historic run to the 1995 Rugby World Cup Championship match.

It's a Wonderful Life

1939, James Stewart & Donna Reed

On the Christmas Eve in Bedford Falls, the guardian angel Clarence is assigned to convince the desperate George Bailey not to commit suicide. George is a good man who sacrificed his dreams and his youth on behalf of the citizens of his small town. He inherited the loan business from his father and he gave up traveling the world and going to university as scheduled. Later he resisted the proposals of the evil banker, Mr. Potter, and never sold his business in order to protect the less fortunate of Bedford Falls, offering them a means to afford to buy their own house. When Clarence sees that he is not able to persuade George to give up his intention to commit suicide, he shows George how life in Bedford Falls would have been if George had never existed.

I've Loved You So Long

2007, Kristin Scott Thomas

This powerful story of familial struggles and redemption follows a shell-shocked Juliette, who returns to live with her young sister Lea after being banished from the family for 15 years. An enormous critical and box office success in France, Scott-Thomas' phenomenal performance has already been singled out by critics for end-of-year award consideration

Jean de Florette

1986, Yves Montand & Gerard Depardieu

In a rural French village an old man and his only remaining relative cast their covetous eyes on an adjoining vacant property. They need its spring water for growing their flowers, so are dismayed to hear that the man who has inherited it is moving in. They block up the spring and watch as their new neighbor tries to keep his crops watered from wells far afield through the hot summer. Though they see his desperate efforts are breaking his health and his wife and daughter's hearts they think only of themselves. Part 1 is followed by...

Mannon of the Spring

1986, Yves Montand & Emmanuelle Beart

In this, the sequel to *Jean de Florette*, Mannon has grown into a beautiful young shepherdess living in the idyllic Provencal countryside. She is determined to take revenge upon the men responsible for the death of her father in the first film, *Jean de Florette*, but a miraculous event changes her heart.

Joshua

2002, Tony Goldwyn, F. Murray Abraham & Giancarlo Gianinni

One day a stranger named Joshua comes to the small town of Auburn and begins to help out in small, but miraculous ways. As Joshua's reputation and popularity grow, a local, embittered clergyman believes that Joshua is a false prophet trying to cheat the people and reports him to the Vatican for condemnation. The conflicts build, but the people of Auburn are forever changed by this unknown stranger.

Joyeux Noel

2005, Diane Kruger & Benno Furman

On the Christmas Eve of 1914, along the Eastern border of Alsace Lorraine in France during World War I, the Scottish, German and French troops share a moment of truce and friendship. A famous soprano succeeds in convincing the Prussian Prince to join her tenor husband to sing for the German high command. She goes to the trenches to sing for the soldiers. A Scottish Lieutenant and a French Lieutenant have an informal and unauthorized meeting with a German Lieutenant and the three negotiate a truce for that night, and an impromptu Christmas Eve mass is celebrated for all the soldiers. When their superiors become aware of the event, they are punished for fraternizing with the enemy. Based on true events.

The King of Masks

2003, Chinese

Wang Bianlian is an aging street performer known as the King of Masks for his mastery of Sichuan Change Art. More than thirty years ago his wife left him with an infant son. The boy died from illness at age ten, leaving Wang a melancholy loner aching for a male descendent to learn his rare and dying art. A famous master performer of the Sichuan Opera offers to bring him into his act, thus giving Wang fame and possible fortune, but Wang opts for living the

life of a simple street performer. Then, one night after a performance he buys a young boy from a slave trader who is posing as the boy's father. "Grandpa" finds new joy in life as he plans to teach "Doggie" (an affectionate term often used for young children in China) his family secret of Change Art. Doggie's unconditional love transforms their mutual destinies.

Ladies in Lavender

2004, Judi Dench & Maggie Smith

The story takes place in pre-war England, where aging sisters Ursula and Janet live peacefully in their cottage on the shore of Cornwall. One morning following a violent storm, the sisters spot from their garden a nearly-drowned man lying on the beach. They nurse him back to health, and discover that he is Polish. Communicating in broken German while they teach him English, they learn his name is Andrea and that he is a particularly gifted violinist. His boat was on its way to America, where he was headed to look for a better life. It doesn't take long for them to become attached to Andrea.

Malèna

2001, Monica Bellucci

On the day in 1940 that Italy enters the war, two things happen to the 12-year-old Renato: he gets his first bike, and he gets his first look at Malèna. She is a beautiful, silent outsider who's moved to this Sicilian town to be with her husband, Nico. He promptly goes off to war, leaving her to the lustful eyes of the men and the sharp tongues of the women. During the next few years, as Renato grows toward manhood, he watches Malèna suffer and prove her mettle. He sees her loneliness, then grief when Nico is reported dead, the effects of slander on her relationship with her father, her poverty, her humiliating search for survival, and her final transformation.

The Reader

2008, Ralph Fiennes & Kate Winslet

In post-WWII Germany, after a summer affair with a mysterious older woman, the youthful barrister Michael Berg loses contact with her. Ten years later he encounters his former lover as she defends herself in a war crimes trial and wrestles with a secret. This is a beautifully interpreted tale of truth and reconciliation: how one generation comes to terms with the crimes of another.

Remember the Titans
2000, Denzel Washington

Suburban Virginia schools had been segregated for generations, in sight of the Washington Monument over the river in the nation's capital. One black and one white high school are closed and the students are sent to Williams High School under federal mandate to integrate. The year is seen through the eyes of the football team where the man hired to coach the black school is made head coach over the highly successful white coach. Based on actual events of 1971, the team becomes the unifying symbol for the community as the boys and the adults learn to depend on and trust each other.

The Scent of a Woman
1992, Al Pacino & Chris O'Donnell

Retired colonel Frank Slade has a secret plan for a special Thanksgiving weekend in New York City. Charlie Simms, a prep school student, needs some money and agrees to care for the blind veteran for the weekend. The two enter an event-filled, life-changing experience when their code of honor collides with one's past and the other's present. Based on the 1974 Italian film *Profumo di Donna*.

Shadrach
1998, Harvey Keitel

In 1935, 99-year-old former slave Shadrach asks to be buried on the soil where he was born to slavery. That land is owned by the large Dabney family —Vernon, Trixie and their seven children—who defy law and tradition to do what is right.

Shirley Valentine
1989, Pauline Collins & Tom Conti

Shirley is a middle-aged Liverpool housewife, who finds herself talking to the wall while she prepares her husband's chip'n'egg, wondering what happened to her life. She compares scenes in her current life with what she used to be like and feels that she and her life have stagnated. But when her best friend wins an all-expenses-paid vacation to Greece for two, Shirley begins to see the world, and herself, in a different light.

The Straight Story

1999, Sissy Spacek

This film chronicles a trip made by 73-year-old Alvin Straight from Laurens, Iowa, to Mt. Zion, Wis., in 1994 on a riding lawn mower. The man undertook this strange journey in order to mend his relationship with his estranged, 75-year-old brother Lyle. Based on a true story.

The Way Home

2003, Korean

Seven-year-old Sang-woo is left with his grandmother in a remote village while his mother looks for work. Born and raised in the city, Sang-woo quickly comes into conflict with his old-fashioned, mute grandmother and his new rural surroundings. Disrespectful and selfish, Sang-woo lashes out in anger, perceiving that he has been abandoned. He trades his grandmother's only treasure for a video game; he throws his food and he throws tantrums. When Sang-woo's mother finds work and finally returns for him, Sang-woo has become a different boy. Through his grandmother's boundless patience, love and devotion, he learns to embrace empathy, humility and family.

Whale Rider

2002, Keisha Castle-Hughes

On the east coast of New Zealand, the Whangara people believe their presence there dates back a thousand years or more to a single ancestor, Paikea, who escaped death when his canoe capsized by riding to shore on the back of a whale. From then on, Whangara chiefs, always the first-born, always male, have been considered Paikea's direct descendants. Pai, an 11-year-old girl in a patriarchal New Zealand tribe, believes she is destined to be the new chief. But her grandfather Koro is bound by tradition to pick a male leader. Pai loves Koro more than anyone in the world, but she must fight him and a thousand years of tradition to fulfill her destiny.

The White Countess

Ralph Fiennes & Natasha Richardson

Russian Countess Sofia Belinskya remembers old times of opulence and fancy parties, while she and her husband's family are living in exile in Shanghai, during the 1930s. Now, she has a poor life with her daughter Katya. The Countess works as a hostess and companion lady in a dance club, where she entertains all kinds of

men, dancing with them and having a chat. There, she makes the acquaintance of a blind American diplomat, Todd Jackson, a kind man with whom she begins a friendship. Years later, Jackson sets up a glamorous club, called "The White Countess", taking Sofia with him to work there as a companion lady. But Sofia doesn't want Katya to find out about her real work, protecting the girl from following in her foot steps in the future. Between Jackson and Sofia there exists a special attraction, which could turn into love at any moment. The Japanese invasion begins, threatening their dreams and longings.

William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet

1968, Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey

Shakespeare's classic tale of romance, tragedy and reconciliation. In the last scene the feuding Montagues and Capulets, looking in horror upon the bodies of their dead children, lay aside their hatred and vow to make peace. No need to say more: this exquisitely beautiful film classic by Franco Zeffirelli says it all.

Wit;

2001, Emma Thompson

Based on the Margaret Edson play, Vivian Bearing, a demanding and uncompromising professor of 17th century English poetry specializing in the holy sonnets of John Donne, is diagnosed with advanced (stage 4) metastatic ovarian cancer. Being an academic, she treats the news with a certain matter-of-factness much like she would her own research. Indeed, her medical team treat her like a research experiment, with a "live at all cost" mentality. The doctors recommend an experimental treatment of aggressive chemotherapy, to which she agrees. As her treatment progresses, she wishes she had some more truly caring human interaction from people who see her as a person and not just a research experiment.

