

# Driving Miss Daisy heads for the Oscars

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The setting is in Georgia in the '50's and '60's. The characters range from the rich owners of big mansions and a cotton manufacturing company to the oppressed blacks of that time. The scenery is gorgeous at moments. This description provides the setting for the touching new film *Driving Miss Daisy*.

Based on the play by Alfred Uhry, this film deals with the many issues of prejudice, the tough and sometimes sad human process of aging, and the continuation of bonding friendships that last a lifetime.

Producers Richard and Lili Zanuck, along with director Bruce Beresford, did a fine job in combining moments of humor, anger, and sadness into a tear-jerking film. Jessica Tandy plays the leading role of Miss Daisy Werthan, a rich widow who is in her 70's when the film begins.

Miss Daisy is a very stubborn and strong-willed old woman

who, to her dismay, is beginning to lose the ability to do things as she did when she was younger. One example is driving. After she wrecks her car by backing out of her garage and over a ledge, her son, Booley (Dan Aykroyd), decides it's time to hire a driver. That's where Hoke (Morgan Freeman), a friendly and funny black man, comes into the picture.

At first "Mother Werthan", as she's called by her adoring daughter-in-law, is as stubborn and hard to get along with as an old goat. Hoke tries to please her, make her laugh, and even helps out her maid, Ardella, to try to impress her, but Mrs. Werthan does everything in her power to ridicule him and make him feel unnecessary. In her eyes, he is a waste of her son's money.

After a lot of coaxing, Hoke finally persuades Miss Daisy to let him drive her to the grocery store. Although she agrees to get into the car, her complaining about Hoke's driving is incessant. It only takes a short time, though, before the friendship of

these two totally different people grows into a strong and lasting one.

Hoke becomes a part of the family. He builds a relationship with Miss Daisy's maid Ardella and the bonds grow over a long period of time.

As the movie progresses and the aging process touches each character, Hoke and Miss Daisy

then gives Hoke a Christmas gift but tries to disguise her generosity by referring to the gift as something she found and didn't want. The gift is a book that will help the illiterate Hoke learn how to read and write.

Another part of the movie that expresses the friendship along with the prejudice of that time is a long trip that Miss Daisy and Hoke must take out of the state to go to a relative's birthday party. During the course of the trip, the two stop for lunch along a roadside and are approached by two police officers. The officers ask who the car belongs to and Miss Daisy boldly answers that it's hers. After more rude questions and Miss Daisy's retaliations, the officers leave the two of them alone, making a few racial comments to themselves as they walk away. The comments were in reference to Mrs. Werthan's being a Jew with a black man like Hoke.

After this incident, the two get lost due to Miss Daisy's directions, but with Hoke's help and comforting they finally arrive

at their destination.

As the end of the film approaches, Miss Daisy becomes senile and Hoke is forced to stop driving due to his ever-worsening eye condition. The two are separated as Booley is forced to put his mother in a convalescent home and sell her house. The friendship and love don't end here, though. Hoke visits a deteriorating Miss Daisy and a lifelong bond continues even through hard times.

*Driving Miss Daisy* is a great film. Jessica Tandy does a wonderful job playing a role with such a diversity of personalities. One minute Miss Daisy is a cranky old woman whom no one can please, the next she is sharing her inner feelings with her loved and trusted confidant Hoke.

All the acting and directing is superb. More importantly, however, the way so many important issues were presented provides the film with a thought-provoking commentary on the social problems faced during that era.

## Review

share quite a bit. One comical incident that shows the will for giving, along with the will to remain strong, takes place on the front steps of Booley and Flourine's mansion around Christmas time. Miss Daisy's son and daughter-in-law are having a party and Hoke drives Miss Daisy to their house. She

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