

# Films with Moral and Spiritual Themes

by Ken Boa



Film is a little like food: it ranges from junk to gourmet. As with your own nutritional choices, you'll have to choose your cinematic diet with care, cognizant of your personal proclivities and temptations. The following are select films with moral and spiritual themes. A longer list follows the short list.

## Short List

- **The Seventh Seal**—Despair in a world without God
- **Close Encounters of the Third Kind**—The quest for transcendence without God
- **The Matrix**—The question of what is real in a postmodern world
- **Crimes and Misdemeanors**—The problem of morality without absolutes
- **Chariots of Fire**—Heroism inspired by radically different quests
- **The Shawshank Redemption**—Redemptive suffering in a fallen world
- **Babette's Feast**—Reconciliation through sacrificial love
- **Enchanted April**—Enhanced relationships as a hint of heaven

## Longer List

(Key)

- Good synthesis of artistic merit and spiritual themes
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**Bold = films taught by Ken Boa**

About Schmidt

Alexander Nevsky (Eisenstein)

All Quiet on the Western Front

Amacord (Fellini)

• Amadeus Amélie (Jeunet)

• Babette's Feast (Axel)

A Beautiful Mind Beauty and the Beast (Cocteau)

- Being There Ben-Hur (1959)
- Blade Runner (reality, humanity)

Blue, White, Red (Krzysztof Kieslowski's Three Colors Trilogy)

Braveheart

Broadway Danny Rose (Woody Allen)

**Bruce Almighty (some sections)**

- Casablanca

•• **Chariots of Fire**

Citizen Kane

**City Slickers (some sections)**

- Close Encounters of the Third Kind
- The Color of Paradise (Majidi)

•• **Crimes and Misdemeanors**

• **Dead Poets Society**

The Decalogue, (Kieslowski)

The Deer Hunter

Diary of a Country Priest (Bresson)

The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie (Buñuel)

Dreams (Kurosawa)

- Enchanted April

Forest Gump

The Fountainhead

Gate of Hell (Kurosawa)

• **Gladiator**

The Gospel According to Matthew (Pasolini)

- Grand Canyon

Groundhog Day

Henry V

The Hour of the Wolf (Bergman)

Ikiru (Kurosawa)

• **It's a Wonderful Life**

- Jean de Florette/Manon of the Spring (Berri)
- King of Hearts
- La Strada (Fellini)

Last of the Mohicans

Last Year at Marienbad (Resnais)

- Les Misérables
- Life Is Beautiful

The Lion King

- The Lord of the Rings Trilogy (**The Fellowship of the Ring**, The Two Towers, The Return of the King)

The Magnificent Ambersons

- **A Man for All Seasons**

Manhattan

- **The Matrix**

Metropolis (Lang, 1927)

A Midsummer's Night Dream (1935)

Much Ado about Nothing

Nosferatu (Murnau, 1922; Herzog, 1979)

O Brother, Where Art Thou?

October Sky

One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest

- The Ox-bow Incident

Papillon

Pleasantville

Rain Man

- Rashomon (Kurosawa)

Regarding Henry

- Saving Private Ryan

The Scarlet Letter (sin, grace, redemption)

- The Searchers

The Scent of Green Papaya (Tran)

- The Seven Samurai (Kurosawa)
- The Seventh Seal (Bergman)

•• **The Shawshank Redemption**

- Schindler's List

Simon Burch

- Tender Mercies

The Tree of Wooden Clogs (Olmí)

Throne of Blood (Kurosawa)

The Truman Show

2001: A Space Odyssey

Ugetsu (Kurosawa)

- Unforgiven

Viridiana (Buñuel)

- War and Peace (Bondarchuk)
- Wild Strawberries (Bergman)

The Wizard of Oz

- Yojimbo (Kurosawa)