

On Golden Pond

Adapted from his own play by Ernest Thompson, *On Golden Pond* is a brilliant, heart warming and touching drama. Norman Thayer Jnr (Henry Fonda) is a retired college professor and about to turn 80. His wife Ethel (Katherine Hepburn) has put up with his grumpy facade for their whole married life and sees through it to the insecure but loving man underneath. They have had a summer cottage on Golden Pond since their early married years and raised their somewhat estranged daughter Chelsea (Jane Fonda) at their lakeside cabin.

For Norman's 80th birthday, Ethel invites Chelsea and her new boyfriend Bill (Dabney Coleman) to the cabin to celebrate as a family. Bill also brings, to the Thayers' surprise, his thirteen-year-old son Billy (Doug McKeon) — cue some brilliantly funny repartee between Norman and the two Bills. Chelsea and Bill leave for a European vacation, with Billy staying behind with the Thayers. After some initial bravado, Billy slowly accepts life at Golden Pond and develops a warm and friendly relationship with the ageing couple.

On their return from Europe, Chelsea announces that she married Bill (some more brilliant dialogue with Norman), but struggles to overcome her fear and her need to be validated by him. Ethel plays a pivotal role for both Billy and then Chelsea to help them overcome Norman's facade. The ending is heart warming and very moving.

In parts brilliantly funny, moving, annoying and very beautiful, *On Golden Pond* was Fonda's and Hepburn's first film together. They played their parts brilliantly, appearing as a loving couple barely coping with advancing age and all the problems it brings. The supporting cast was uniformly excellent, Mark Rydell's direction sympathetic and the cinematography (Billy Williams) superb. Henry Fonda won the Academy Award for Best Actor, Katherine Hepburn Best Actress, and the film won Best Screenplay.

Nine of us experienced the reasons why on 13th September. One of the best films ever made, in this author's opinion.