

Overview: Richard Dreyfuss plays the role of his life as Mr. Holland. Mr. Holland is a struggling musician who decides to take a ‘fall-back’ position as a music teacher to pay the bills. Thirty years later, Kennedy High School decides to cut the music department to balance the budget. He was dragged into this profession, but now realizes that his real legacy is the generations of students he has inspired.

Moral of the Story: *Life is what happens while you're making other plans* (a quote by John Lennon) frames it nicely. In other words, learn to appreciate the life you're living, not the one you wish you had.

Author's Note: It was tough to choose scenes because there are so many story lines. All you really need to view is the final scene to make the emotional connection, but the other scenes provide a proper context.

Selected Scenes

Scene 3 & 4 (4:29 - 14:15)	9 minutes
Scene 8 (30:31 - 36:50)	6 minutes
Scenes 20 (1:46:04) - end (2:16:25)	<u>30 minutes</u>
Total	45 minutes

Discussion Questions

- 1) Mr. Holland refers to teaching as a “fall-back position.” He initially feels nervous about teaching and he feels horrible because he can't connect with his students. As a result, he eagerly exits the school building faster than most students on a daily basis. How do you feel knowing that teachers are real people who struggle, dream, feel defeated, anxious, scared, motivated, and strive to do better?
- 2) Mr. Holland teaches music appreciation and ironically has a deaf child. Consequently, he feels like his son cannot connect with him because he cannot hear. Describe what happens to turn resentment into appreciation?
- 3) A main theme of the movie is a line from the song Mr. Holland sings to his son. The line is a quote from John Lennon - *Life is what happens while you're making other plans*. How does this line apply to the movie? How does this line apply to your life?
- 4) Oprah says that people just want to know that they matter. Mr. Holland begins to believe that his life had no meaning and that he was not appreciated. What do you think the surprise “going-away” party meant to him? Why?
- 5) In the final scene, his former student says, “Mr. Holland is not rich and he is not famous... but, look around, there is not a life in this room that you have not touched.” When you are 70 years old, and you are looking back at your own life, do you think it will be more important to have been rich and famous or to have mattered and to feel appreciated? Explain your answer.