



Grandpa and Me and a Helicopter to Heaven

This short documentary tells the story of the close relationship between a grandfather and his grandson with old family footage and moments by the bedridden grandfather's side—with one special field trip.

Recommended for ages 10 +

Themes: family, life stages, death, cross-cultural understanding



Director(s): Åsa Blanck and Johan Palmgren | **15 min** | **Documentary** | **2012** | **Country:** Sweden | **Language:** Swedish w/ English subtitles

Official film website: www.johanpalmgren.com/grandpa-and-me-and-a-helicopter-to-heaven

SET THE STAGE | THOUGHT-STARTERS

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Archival Footage:** Material obtained from a film library, archive, or personal collection and inserted into a documentary to show historical events.
- **Documentary:** A type of film that attempts to explain reality.
- **Juxtaposition:** Placing two different things side by side for comparison.
- **Symbol:** A thing that represents or stands for something else.

For more film terms, refer to the PCFF Film Glossary (pcffri.org/FilmHub).



Clues and Cues

Pay attention while watching

- How does the movie's soundtrack influence your feelings?

TALK ABOUT IT | DISCUSSION

- What happens in this story? What is the timeline of the narrative? In your opinion, which are the most important scenes and why?
- The film opens with a shot of David as a baby lying in bed and then of his grandfather lying in bed. Why did the director juxtapose those two images? What message does it communicate about life?
- How would you describe the relationship between the characters? What does David treasure about his grandfather? What does the grandfather love about David?
- There are many things in this film that serve as symbols for the characters and their relationships (for example, mushrooms and helicopters). What do these represent for them? Why do you think the filmmakers decided to title the film as they did?
- The filmmakers did not make a chronological film. It goes back and forth between the present story and clips of David with his grandfather when he was younger. Why do you think the filmmakers decided to do this? How does it help us develop a deeper understanding of the characters, the narrative, and the mood of the film?
- What are the challenges of making a documentary film as opposed to a fictional film? What solutions can documentary filmmakers use to solve these challenges? Do you think there are parts of this story the filmmaker chose to leave out? If you were to make a documentary about your own life, are there parts of your story you would choose to leave out?



GET CREATIVE | EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



For Activity Reel details, downloadable storyboard template and more, visit the the Film Hub website: www.pcffri.org/FilmHub

• Writing Prompt

Create a “memory postcard” for a special family member. On the front, draw or watercolor paint a picture of a special memory. On the back, write a note to him or her, describing the memory in your own words

• Make a Scrapbook

Create a scrapbook about a special family member or friend. Go through old photographs and letters and souvenirs, or re-create them as drawings. Use a selection of these items in order to tell the story of your relationship with that person. Experiment with different layouts before gluing anything down. For instance, what happens if everything is presented chronologically instead of thematically?

• Memory Storyboard

Materials: Paper and pencil, storyboard template (available online at pcffri.com/FilmHub)

Create a storyboard for a short documentary about a special family member or friend. On each square of the storyboard, plan out the scenes. Draw ideas for the settings and the people in the scene. For example, “Uncle Eddy carving the turkey at Thanksgiving while he sings—like he does every year.” Make sure to include at least a couple of settings that are significant to your relationship (like the woods in Grandpa and Me and the Helicopter to Heaven). Also, think of ways to incorporate “archival footage” (either videos or photographs) of you and this person. Where will these archival items go in the documentary and why? Think carefully about their placement as a way to create mood and narrative. Are there any special moments not captured by photo or video? How could you still represent those moments or incorporate them into the film?

MAKE CONNECTIONS | ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources complement the film and inspire further discussion or programming.

BOOKS

• Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss

by Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen

This children’s book tells the story of Grandy, an old woman who recently suffered a loss. She makes “tear soup,” a special recipe which combines all of her memories of her late loved one.

• Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children

by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

A picture book which explains the beauty of the life cycle to kids through the stories of plants, animals and people.

FILMS

• A Shine of Rainbows (2009)

A lonely orphan’s life is transformed by an extraordinary woman who teaches him to conquer grief and discover the magic in nature and himself.

• Finn (2013)

Finn, a 9-year-old boy mourning his mother’s death, finds comfort playing the violin.

• Ghost of Grandpa Tong (2015)

This short film is a story about the gap between cultures and generations, and the overriding connectedness that draws us all together despite our differences.

• T.I.M. (2014)

Tibor refuses to trade in his beloved house robot for a newer model when it breaks down. He sets out to find a mythic robot maker to fix T.I.M. before it breaks down completely.

• Indicates PCFF festival selection

LOCAL CONNECTIONS:

• Friends Way:

An organization that provides support for grieving children, teens, and families in Rhode Island. www.friendsway.org

BEYOND THE FILM | RELATED INTERNET LINKS

• “About That Farm Upstate”

A *This American Life* segment about a grief-counseling center for children in Salt Lake City addresses how to talk to children about death.

www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/557/birds-bees?act=3

