

# A Timeless and Moving Experience: Thoughts on *Forrest Gump*

By Lin Shiyu Updated: 2024/09/14 | Published: 2023/09/14

Released in 1994, *Forrest Gump* was a title frequently mentioned throughout my childhood and teenage years. I may have had several opportunities to watch it back then, but perhaps due to my age, I couldn't recall many details. As an adult, I constantly saw short commentary videos explaining the film, which suddenly sparked a determination to watch it properly. I wanted to cast aside second-hand interpretations and seek the most direct, first-hand emotional experience.

To briefly touch upon my objective view of the film: as a biopic, *Forrest Gump* portrays its protagonist with enough detail and charm to make him genuinely likeable and relatable. The film cleverly integrates major U.S. historical events, adding a sense of time and entertainment value. It makes Gump feel like someone we might actually know—someone experiencing this absurd yet authentic reality just as we do. The passage of time has not dimmed the brilliance of *Forrest Gump*; the care put into the plot and dialogue by the screenwriter and director ensures that this 20-year-old film still shines brightly today.

Having covered the objective aspects, I want to share my most intuitive feelings. In the straightforward narrative, Gump's life seems filled with explosive events. Yet, in Gump's eyes, these are simply part of his consistent attitude toward life—an attitude he holds for decades. This is something we can reflect upon for ourselves: choose with your heart and walk steadily forward, and the world will eventually open a path for you.

That Gump possesses such a positive philosophy of life is inseparable from his mother's upbringing. This was my most profound realization upon rewatching the movie years later. I believe that as we grow older, we become increasingly aware of how much family education influences an individual. If Gump's mother had viewed him as a burden, constantly belittled him, or deemed him unfit for society, his spirit would have gradually withered in the gloom of childhood, regardless of his natural aptitude. A withered soul struggles to even nurture itself, let alone achieve success.

*Forrest Gump* is undoubtedly a masterclass in storytelling. It depicts a life that is inspirational, entertaining, and full of drama—a high-quality film that is both popular

with audiences and educational. However, from my perspective, I couldn't help but have some new thoughts. Jenny, as a supporting character, appears with a frequency that makes her impossible to ignore, even if we aren't meant to focus too heavily on her movements. Based on this, I feel the screenwriter was somewhat lazy in characterizing Jenny. She acts merely as a synchronized character in a parallel timeline; her growth has limited relevance to Gump, yet she always appears exactly when Gump "needs" her. Although it feels like the writer tried to give Jenny multiple facets while keeping her gentle, there is an unavoidable suspicion that she was used merely as a "plot device."

This inference stems from the scene where Jenny bears Gump's child. I wonder if the screenwriter felt Gump *had* to have a child for the story to be complete, thus requiring Jenny to "complete the assignment" with Gump at the last moment. The intention to force a happy ending felt a bit excessive; I consider this a rather confusing storyline within the movie.

Another point that bothered me was the scene where Gump's mother engages in a sexual transaction with the principal to get Gump into school. I pondered this for a long time and still don't quite understand its significance. Aside from dark humor or highlighting the mother's sacrifice (?), I fail to see any deeper meaning. As a female viewer, watching such a depiction felt somewhat off-putting (uncomfortable). However, the flaws do not obscure the jade—I don't feel it ruined the entire movie.

These are my thoughts on *Forrest Gump*. I believe this film will continue to influence people deeply in the future. It is well worth watching when you need strength. We are all ordinary people; excessive "chicken soup" (motivational platitudes) can make us lose our way, but a story told gently and calmly takes root in our hearts and endures endlessly. *Forrest Gump* is exactly that kind of movie.

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## References

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