

BBC Learning English
6 Minute English
7 March 2013



Why we love a film that makes us cry

Rob: Hello, I'm Rob, welcome to 6 Minute English. With me in the studio today is Feifei. Hello there.

Feifei: Hi Rob.

Rob: In today's programme we're discussing films that make us cry and why we actually enjoy watching something that makes us **burst into tears** – or in other words, to cry out loud. And we'll also be looking at the language associated with crying. So, crying out loud, surely this is something that you have done Feifei?

Feifei: I'm afraid yes, I have done that.

Rob: Is there a particular film that's made you cry?

Feifei: I think, Turner and Hooch... and how about you Rob?

Rob: Well, being a man, obviously I would never cry - well almost. There is an old children's film called The Railway Children. At the end when the children's father returns from exile, his daughter runs down the station platform shouting "my daddy, my daddy!" That makes me **misty-eyed**.

Feifei: You big softie!

Rob: I suppose I am. Now Feifei before we discuss this subject further, here's your question for today. Which film has won the most ever Oscar awards?

- a) Ben Hur
- b) Slumdog Millionaire
- c) Gone With The Wind

Feifei: I'm going to go for answer b) Slumdog Millionaire.

Rob: Ok, well let's find out if you are right at the end of the programme. Of course, the 85th Academy Awards – better known as The Oscars – were held recently and there was one major weepy that won several awards.

Feifei: **A weepy?** You mean a film that makes us cry?

Rob: Yes. And that film was Les Miserables. I've seen it and it really is a **tearjerker** – it literally causes tears to roll down our cheeks! So why do we choose to see a film – or movie – that makes us get so emotional?

Feifei: I suppose it's the mark of a good film if it causes us to reveal our emotions. A really sad story, if it's well acted and directed, can really make us **blub** – another word for crying. And **a sob story** – one where a character tries to get our sympathy for him or her – can have the same effect. But what is it about a film that can makes us cry when we can't cry in real life?

Rob: Well, according to psychologist, Dr Averil Leimon, we allow our emotions to be influenced when we watch a film. What word does she use to mean 'influenced'?

Dr Averil Leimon, Psychologist:

People want to have their emotions manipulated, because then they're allowed to have them. We spend so much of our life being told you shouldn't feel like that, you don't feel like that when in fact we do feel like that. And both the visual and the, you know, the auditory allows us to know what emotion we're meant to feel.

Feifei: So Dr Averil Leimon says we like to have our emotions manipulated – influenced by a film. In real life we are told how we should feel.

Rob: But when watching a film, at the cinema for example, we can let our emotions loose. But there is something else in a film that effects our emotions and gives us **goose bumps** – or a feeling that makes our hair stand on end and we get little bumps on our skin.

Feifei: Yes, Dr Leimon says there are visual and auditory clues that provoke our feelings – so that's the style of the pictures and the music or sound effects that are used.

Rob: (*Mimics theme to Jaws*) Like the music in the Jaws movie, although that's not really a tearjerker.

Feifei: Come on Rob, I bet you cried at the scary bits?!

Rob: I told you, men don't cry. Although there is one film that has had grown men **crying their hearts out** – which means they've been crying uncontrollably. That's the film Toy Story 3.

Feifei: Really?

Rob: Yes. I don't think it's because the film is sad but because watching it makes men nostalgic about their youth and perhaps they can see their kids reflected in the story too.

Feifei: Well I bet these men were crying alone. They wouldn't want to be seen crying in public?

Rob: Well not according to Philip Sheppard who composes – or writes – film music. He thinks letting our feelings out – he calls it catharsis – is better in a group...

Philip Sheppard, Film score composer:

All of us sort of need to find a catharsis, especially within a group to have this sort of place to have an emotional response. It ends up being something where you need to have that kind of release. As British people we're terribly bad at it I think. But when people find an outlet for it such as a film, especially when they are in a crowd, people's emotional responses are much more instantaneously responsive.

Rob: So he says we all need to find a catharsis. Being in a group is a good place for letting your emotions out. When you watch a film with others you react to other people's emotional responses.

Feifei: So if one person cries then other people will start to cry too. Unless you're British of course!

Rob: That's what Philip Sheppard thinks. And we could say '**it's a crying shame**', meaning it's regrettable or it's an unfortunate situation.

Feifei: OK Rob, well let's not **cry over spilt milk!**

Rob: Uh?

Feifei: Let's not get upset over something quite small. Could I just have the answer to today's question please?

Rob: Yes of course. Earlier, I asked you, which film has won the most ever Oscars?

Feifei: And I said Slumdog Millionaire.

Rob: And you were wrong. The answer was Ben Hur. The 1959 film has won 11 awards – the same number has also been won by Titanic and The Lord of the Rings: The Return of The King. Well, Feifei before we go, please could you remind us of some of the crying-related words and phrases that we've heard today.

Feifei: Sure. We heard...

burst into tears

misty-eyed

a weepy

tearjerker

blub

a sob story

goose bumps

crying their hearts out

it's a crying shame

cry over spilt milk

Rob: Thanks Feifei. Well, it's a crying shame but we're out of time. Please join us again soon for 6 Minute English from bbclearningenglish.

Both: Bye.

Vocabulary and definitions

to burst into tears	to start crying loudly and suddenly
misty-eyed	feeling that you might start to cry
a weepy	a film that makes you cry
a tearjerker	(also) a film that makes you cry
to blub	to cry noisily
a sob story	a story someone tells to get sympathy
goose bumps	small bumps on your skin caused by being scared, excited, upset or cold
to cry your heart out	to cry uncontrollably
it's a crying shame	it's regrettable, unfortunate or unfair
to cry over spilt milk	to waste time worrying about something small or something that cannot be changed

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