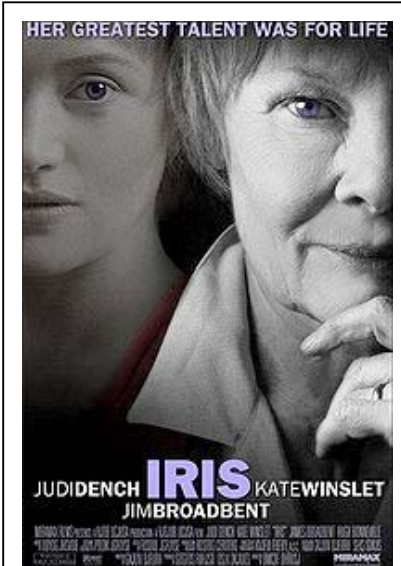




Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: **Kate the Great** *Iris*

"I feel as if I am sailing into darkness." - Iris



Director:

Richard Eyre

Producers:

Robert Fox
Scott Rudin

Writer:

Richard Eyre
Charles Wood
John Bayley (novel)

Starring:

Judi Dench
Kate Winslet
Jim Broadbent
Hugh Bonneville

Music

James Horner

Cinematography

Roger Pratt

Editing

Martin Walsh

Distributor:

Miramax Films

Release date:

December 14, 2001

Running time:

92 minutes

Budget

\$5,500,000

Box Office gross

\$15,035,827

Iris tells the story of the relationship between acclaimed English philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch and her husband John Bayley. Based on Bayley's memoirs, this is a tender yet powerful story that contrasts the vitality of the young Iris with her later years as she suffers from Alzheimer's disease, and how John was bewitched, and befuddled, by both incarnations.

As the young Iris, Kate Winslet is startling in her emotional exuberance, serene confidence, and freedom of expression. This counterpoints the extraordinary lead performance of Judi Dench as the older, painfully lost, Iris. Jim Broadbent is also excellent as the lovingly devoted John, helplessly watching as he is shut out from Iris' mind once again, just as he was in their youth.

Early on, the film is gently amusing in depicting these two intellectuals flounder when faced with mundane issues such as a trip to the supermarket, but becomes tragically poignant as Iris' "first-rate" mind begins to fail her and even basic tasks become difficult, and eventually terrifying. It is in these painful scenes that this sad film is at its best, as cherished memories become terrifying ordeals of confusion, and buried frustrations are brought back to the surface. In the end, however, the film affirms the values which Iris Murdoch herself held to be most valuable, and upon which their marriage was based: freedom of thought and enduring, unconditional love.

Did you know?

- Iris Murdoch (1919-1999) published over 25 books, including the Booker Prize winner *The Sea, The Sea*. In 2001 The American Modern Library selected her first novel *Under The Net* as one of the 100 best novels of the 20th century.
- Jim Broadbent won a Best Supporting Actor Oscar for his performance. Winslet was nominated for Best Supporting Actress, but lost to Jennifer Connelly (*A Beautiful Mind*) and Dench lost to Halle Berry (*Monster's Ball*) for Best Actress.
- The beach scenes were filmed at Southwold in Suffolk, England, one of Murdoch's favorite locations in real life. The rest of the film was filmed in Oxford.
- Alzheimer's disease is only mentioned once in the script.



Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: Kate the Great *Iris*

**"You Won't Keep Still!" - John
"I Can't Keep Still!" - Iris**

Things to Explore

- Why does the film's structure shift between past and present so often? Whose memories are we seeing at which point, and why?
- How does the film embody Iris' claim that "freedom of the mind" is the only "freedom of any importance" in life?
- What is the significance of swimming in the film?
- Why does John tolerate Iris' promiscuity?
- Why does John tell Iris that he "hates" her and that "he's never known anything about her?"
- What is the significance of the stones Iris is collecting on the beach?
- What do "love" and "goodness" mean for Iris?
- When John Bayley's book *Elegy For Iris* was first released, some critics wondered if the film was "an act of revenge or reverence" in its unflinching portrayal of his more celebrated wife's disease. Do you think the film is equally as ambiguous?
- Why does Iris have such an emotional response to her friend's funeral?

Themes

- Memory
- Language and literature
- Freedom of thought
- Love and devotion
- Secrets
- Imagination
- Jealousy



Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: Kate the Great *Iris*

**"Such things you wrote. Special things. Secret things. Do you know any secrets now, Iris?" -
John**

Library Resources

1) *Elegy for Iris*, John Bayley. This loving memoir forms the basis for much of *Iris* the film, including the structural switches between past and present as Bayley and Murdoch grapple with Iris' Alzheimer's disease.

Copy	Material	Location
B MURDOCH,I. BAY	Book	Biography

2) *Iris and her Friends : A Memoir of Memory and Desire*, John Bayley. As Iris Murdoch's memory slowly began to fade, her husband John Bayley's mind was filled with details of their relationship, which form the basis of this follow-up to *Elegy for Iris*.

Copy	Material	Location
B MURDOCH,I. BAY	Book	Biography

3) *Iris Murdoch : A Life*, Peter J. Conradi. A full biography of the great novelist's life by the literary executor of her estate that provides a more distanced view than Bayley's memoirs, but is no less controversial.

Copy	Material	Location
B MURDOCH,I. CON	Book	Biography

4) *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*

A collection of Iris Murdoch's essays, first published in 1998. Many more of her fictional titles and philosophic works can also be found in the Glenview Public Library.

Copy	Material	Location
824.914 MUR	Book	Nonfiction

5) *Iris [videorecording (DVD)]*

The DVD contains special features including a brief documentary at "A Look at Iris" about the film's production, and a special message from actor David Hyde Pierce, whose grandfather suffered from Alzheimer's disease.

Copy	Material	Location
DVD IRI	DVD, Fiction	Audio-Visual - Movies



Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: Kate the Great *Iris*

"She's in her own world now. It's perhaps what she's always wanted." - John

Online Resources

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0280778/>

The film's page at the Internet Movie Database, where it currently has a rating of 7.72 out of 10 from over 7,451 users.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m47A0AmqxQE>

A video of Iris Murdoch discussing her philosophical thought and literary writing that shows her fierce intellect and command of language.

<http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/research/iris-murdoch/>

The University of Kingston's Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies website, maintained by Peter Conradi, her authorised biographer.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/3571696/Iris-has-been-transformed-into-art.html>

A fascinating 2002 article by John Bayley on what it was like to watch his relationship with Iris Murdoch portrayed on screen.

<http://www.nypl.org/blogs/2009/01/22/musing-iris-murdoch>

A *New York Public Library* blog that assesses Iris Murdoch's works and legacy since her death in 1999.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/1839316.stm>

A BBC news article on the film, in which Winslet reveals that John Bayley watching her and Judie Dench was "like watching Iris again."

<http://www.discoverkate.com/movies/iris/>

This Kate Winslet fansite has interviews taken from the time of *Iris*' release, and a plethora of reviews and other features connected to the film.

<http://www.robotwisdom.com/jorn/iris.html>

A comprehensive resource collection related to Iris Murdoch's life and works.

<http://www.metacritic.com/video/titles/iris/>

The Metacritic page for the film, where it currently has a score of 76 (out of 100) from major film critics.

<http://www.the-philosopher.co.uk/midge.htm>

An interesting short essay on the enduring relevance of Iris Murdoch's moral philosophy.