

Top Ten Movie Moms

By Steven D. Greydanus

When I set out to make a list of great movie moms in honor of Mother's Day, I knew it wouldn't be easy — but I soon found it even harder than I thought. Let's face it : Great mothers are in short supply in the movies. Still, the 10 moms alphabetically listed below more than fit the bill. With families ranging from seven children to one on the way, these mothers see their **families through crises of all kinds while bringing up their kids right** and, in some cases, becoming surrogate mothers to others in need.

What were my criteria ? I set out to find affirmative depictions of :

- **admirable mothers** (real mothers, step-mothers, adoptive or foster mothers)
- **in on-screen mother-child relationships**
- ideally, though not necessarily, in **intact families** of some sort or other

❖ **Leigh Anne Tuohy** (Sandra Bullock) in *The Blind Side* (2009)

Self-assured and indomitable, Leigh Anne's a pistol-packing, Bible-Belt mother of two who doesn't hesitate to open her immaculately appointed home — she's an **interior designer** too — to a homeless, illiterate black youth who quickly becomes one of the family, going on to play football for Ole Miss and Baltimore in this fact-based film.

❖ **Molly Weasley** (Julie Walters) in *Harry Potter*

Table the magic debate. Presiding over an unruly but happy working-class household of nine, including Harry's best friend — as well as his eventual wife —, Mrs. Weasley's maternal heart runs over, **embracing Harry as a surrogate son**. Don't let her frumpy look fool you. Her wand isn't for show... Attack her family at your peril !

❖ **Marta Hanson** (Irene Dunne) in *I Remember Mama* (1948)

Crusty old Uncle Chris may be head of a clan of Norwegian immigrants in San Francisco, but **tireless, resourceful Marta, a mother of four**, is its heart. In one vignette, hospital rules can't keep her from her post-operative daughter's side — and, as she sings a lullaby, for a moment she's a mother to every child in the ward.

❖ **Helen Parr** (Holly Hunter) in *The Incredibles* (2004)

Very few movie moms hold their families together quite as literally as Mrs. Incredible. **Flexible, unflappable, sympathetic but firm, she's in tune with her kids' needs**, works to keep dad involved, and generally inspires **boundless confidence**. She's also a home-maker who can fly a jet plane.

❖ **Annie Hughes** (Jennifer Aniston) in *The Iron Giant* (1999)

Working long hours at the diner to pay the bills, Annie — an Eisenhower-era Air Force widow — may not be able to keep as close an eye on her irrepressible son Hogarth as she'd like, but it's clear she's done a good job raising him. She has **good taste in art**, too, as Hogarth's Beatnik artist friend Dean discovers.

❖ **Samantha** (Cécile de France) in *The Kid with a Bike* (2011)

When a desperate boy unexpectedly throws his arms around her in a doctor's waiting room, Samantha responds with **mysterious openness and sensitivity** in this masterpiece from the Dardenne brothers. A single hairdresser, Samantha's goodness toward young Cecil is unexplained, but one thing is certain : she has a mother's heart.

❖ **Osono** (Keiko Toda) in *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989)

The moms in **Hayao Miyazaki's** films are generally wonderful, but seldom as prominent as Osono, who runs a bakery with her husband. She's very pregnant throughout this charmer, but her warmly maternal relationship with Kiki is ample proof that she'll be a great mom.

❖ **Marmee March** (Spring Byington) in *Little Women* (1933)

Of all the big-screen adaptations of Louisa May Alcott's beloved novel, only George Cukor's classic preserves the March family **matriarch's moral stature as mentor and guide** in her daughters' development while Father is away in the war — for example, raising the girls' consciousness regarding the poverty of a neighbouring family.

❖ **Edna Spalding** (Sally Field) in *Places in the Heart* (1984)

A wife and mother of two in Depression-era Texas, Edna is ill-prepared to fend for her family when her husband, a sheriff, is killed — but she **risers heroically to each challenge**, refusing to allow her children to go with relatives and displaying **great resourcefulness in working** to save her house and land.

❖ **Maria von Trapp** (Julie Andrews) in *The Sound of Music* (1965)

The best stepmother in Hollywood history, Maria faces her fears, tames seven incorrigibly governess-resistant children, **wins over their grieving, rigid military** father, sings through thunderstorms, makes playclothes from old curtains, climbs every mountain, and faces down Nazis. She's one of everyone's favourite things.

And also :

10 More Noteworthy Movie Moms

- **Ellen Ripley** (Sigourney Weaver) in *Aliens* (1986)
- **Fly** (Miriam Margolyes) in *Babe* (1995)
- **Elinor** (Emma Thompson) in *Brave* (2011)
- **Peg Boggs** (Diane Wiest) in *Edward Scissorhands* (1990)
- **Chicha** (Wendy Malick) in *The Emperor's New Groove* (2000)
- **Beth Morgan** (Sara Allgood) in *How Green Was My Valley* (1941)
- **Mother Maria** (Lilia Skala), *Lilies of the Field* (1963)
- **Rachel Cooper** (Lillian Gish) in *Night of the Hunter* (1955)
- **Lynn Sear** (Toni Collette) in *The Sixth Sense* (1999)
- **Ree Dolly** (Jennifer Lawrence) in *Winter's Bone* (2010)