

## Discussion Questions for *Mr. Holland's Opus*

**Some of the major characters to watch for:** Glenn Holland, Iris Holland, Gertrude Lang, Principal Jacobs, Vice-Principal Wolters, Rowena Morgan, Cole Holland

1. Mr. Holland endures a significant internal battle to become a selfless leader. Why was it difficult to make this transition from self-centeredness to other-centeredness? What were some of the breakthrough points that facilitated that transition?
2. Why were students so influenced by Mr. Holland?
3. Throughout the movie, Mr. Holland wrestles competing responsibilities—having too many important things to do at the same time. What are some examples of this and what effect does it have on him and those around him?
4. Assess the leadership style and skill of Principal Jacobs. In your opinion, what makes her an effective or not-so-effective leader?
5. Rowena Morgan, the lead singer in the Gershwin musical, could have completely destroyed Mr. Holland's career and household. But to his credit, he resisted her advances. Other, non-fictional leaders (including Christian leaders), have not resisted this temptation at tremendous personal and professional expense. Why does that happen and what leadership lesson can we glean from this increasingly-frequent phenomenon?

6. Near the end of the movie, the Governor (Gertrude Lang) says the following: “He (Mr. Holland) considers a great part of his life misspent... (But) he’s achieved a success far beyond riches and fame... Look around. There is not one life in this auditorium that you have not touched and each one of us is a better person because of you. We are your symphony, Mr. Holland ...We are the music of your life.”

Throughout the film, this was obvious to everyone except Mr. Holland. Why do you think he did not realize it?

7. What will people do when Principal Wolters retires? In particular, what will that event look like in comparison to the event celebrating Mr. Holland’s retirement? Why would there likely be a difference?

8. What are the major leadership lessons that you take away from this story?