



American Legends: The Life of Henry Fonda

Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures.

*Includes quotes about Fonda and Fonda's own quotes about his life and career.

*Includes a bibliography for further reading.

“I must have had faith that day. When I went out, I was Henry Fonda again. An unemployed actor but a man.” – Henry Fonda

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history’s most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors’ American Legends series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America’s most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

Among all of Hollywood’s iconic leading men, arguably none proved as versatile at acting as Henry Fonda, whose career spanned six decades and earned him Academy Awards for roles in various genres. After breaking into Hollywood in 1935, Fonda quickly rose the ranks, earning an Academy Award nomination in the classic *Twelve Angry Men* (1940), but Fonda had the kind of staying power that most actors could only dream of. In fact, Fonda had already received an honorary lifetime achievement award from the Academy (in 1980) before winning the Oscar for Best Actor for his role in *On Golden Pond* (1981), an award he earned when he was already well into his 70s and only about a year away from his death. Fonda would also earn Emmy nominations for his work on two different shows and even a Grammy for a spoken word album in 1977. And as if all that wasn’t enough, he was also a critically acclaimed stage performer, winning a Tony for *Mister Roberts* in 1948.

A lot of Fonda’s success could be attributed to the fact that he could convincingly play the all-American man that everybody in the nation adored and/or wanted to be, to the extent that one magazine called him “the man we wished we lived next door to.” At the same time, Fonda could portray characters like Tom Joad, who maintain their status as heroes even while breaking rules on-screen. His personal life also seemed to mirror his acting versatility; while his World War II service helped cement his all-American persona, his family life was also extremely troubled, even after he became recognized as the patriarch of a family full of famous actors, including Jane and Bridget Fonda. When Henry played a distant father on-screen in *On Golden Pond* alongside his daughter Jane, the autobiographical elements of the film were apparent to those who knew him. One of the remarkable aspects of Henry Fonda’s career is that he was able to play vastly different roles despite not changing his style of acting. As Henry’s distant personality would suggest, he hailed from an old-school breed of actors who didn’t express emotions outwardly, and even as his progeny would become associated with Method Acting, Henry remained in the same mold as actors like Cary Grant and Jimmy Stewart. Of course, the seemingly effortless nature of Henry’s acting only made him more endearing to contemporary audiences, even as his acting style would eventually go out of style.

American Legends: The Life of Henry Fonda examines the life and career of one of the Golden Era of Hollywood’s biggest stars. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Henry Fonda like never before, in no time at all.

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