

Movie review on film review the man who planted trees

[Environment](#), [Nature](#)



In *The Man Who Planted Trees*, an unnamed narrator (voiced by Christopher Plummer) regales the story of how he came across a desolate valley in France occupied by bickering hordes, decaying buildings, and a lowly shepherd who collects acorns for a project – he wishes to turn that abandoned valley into a thriving forest by planting these acorns and tending to them. As the narrator's life goes on, he returns to the valley to find the forest thriving and the people happy, all thanks to the selfless work of the shepherd. The short film is one of the greatest short films ever made, a tour de force of fluid, stylized animation that uses color and line in very interesting ways to showcase the importance of nature and the interconnected nature of story.

The animation throughout the short film is nothing short of amazing – the whole piece is handdrawn, using pencil and charcoal to create rough and simplistic drawings that are shown in constant sequence. The design of the environment and the characters is never extremely detailed, and the stop-motion effect lends it a jitteriness and lightness of weight that always makes the world feel like it could blow away in a gust of wind. There are few to no cuts in the short film; 'shots' and scenarios are transitioned into smoothly throughout the animation, using fades and the transformation of the objects themselves into the next scene to create a seamless whole. These effects allow the film to seem larger than life, dreamlike and angelic, which also plays into the fact that it is a story. We are seeing these images through the narrator's imagination, and so they do not have the fully-formed nature of human beings – the audience is constantly reminded that this is a story through the fleeting look of the animation.

The use of color is similarly amazing – in the beginning, when the valley is empty, the narrator is spiritually broken and the people quarrel with each other, the animation is very sparse, with little but the object in question being drawn, and everything being drawn in black and white. The sepia tone of most of this early segment makes it seem historical, desolate and sad. This lack of color is most recognizable during the short segment in which the narrator goes off to fight World War I – there it is just black and white clattering of weapons and the curling of smoke from ammunition and explosions. However, once the man returns to the valley to see the forest thriving, the director puts in splashes of color which grow ever more saturated as the film goes on. Here, the film starts to show the same life that the valley does; we see light greens and browns, human characters start taking on their own skin tones, and more.

As support for the forest continues to grow from the now-amicable villagers and the government, colors become fuller and richer, showing the life that this valley provides. At the same time, the shepherd (Elzeard Bouffier) is always given muted tones in contrast to these bolder ones around him – despite the wonderful thing he has done, he did it with little regard for fanfare or recognition. He is a humble man who merely wanted to bring happiness to his area, and so the colors never change for Bouffier – he is as he always was.

There is very little I could do to improve on this film – the animation is absolutely stunning, and the choice to do hand-drawn images for animation lends it an ephemeral quality that would be difficult to top. If there were one thing I could suggest, it would be eliminating the few times when we do

actually get hard cuts in the animation – they are few, but they exist. They do not actively detract from the story, but I think it would help the animation’s sense of fluidity more if they committed 100% to the desire to make the animation all one constantly changing image. This would make the story’s impact more powerful, as it connects all of us in one story subtextually through that choice.

In conclusion, *The Man Who Planted Trees* is an absolutely sublime bit of animation that proves that great things can be done with the medium. The animation has a singular quality to it that makes its message of hope, determination and community clear, and the brittle, constantly changing lines help to remind us how fragile both we as humans and the environment we live in truly are. This is a wonderful short film that shows the importance of nature and conservation in keeping our humanity alive and fostering the good in people. By telling this story through this particular kind of animation, the tale becomes even sweeter and easier to absorb by an audience. I would highly recommend this animated short film to anyone who wants to learn the heights to which a medium can be used to tell a simple, allegorical story that is emotionally affecting.