

When Homer comes back to Coalwood, he is congratulated by everyone in the town, including his science teacher, Miss Riley, who is dying from Hodgkin's disease. Homer and his friends launch their newest and largest rocket, naming it the Miss Riley in memorial of their teacher. John even shows up to see them launch the rocket, and he presses the firing button, a symbol of reconciliation between himself and his son. After the movie, there is video footage of the real Homer Hickam and the rocket boys, along with explanations of what became of each of their lives.

The story is based on the real life of Homer Hickam Jr., making it important to maintain accuracy as much as possible. However, some artistic license was taken in order to create an interesting and entertaining film. For instance, there were in fact six rocket boys, instead of the four portrayed in the film. Homer did not drop out of school to work in the mines, nor did he win any college scholarships at any point in his life. Most importantly, Homer Hickam Jr.'s father was not named John, but in fact Homer Hickam. Johnson decided to change his name to avoid confusing the audience. Despite these changes, *October Sky* still manages to stay fairly accurate in its portrayal of Sputnik and rocketry in general. The movie was also praised for its likeness to Coalwood and other small towns in the late 1950s. This film definitely provides a realistic setting, and, even though details in Homer's life were falsified for the sake of the film, *October Sky* accurately depicts what life was like living in Coalwood in the 1950s.

In conclusion, *October Sky* paints a realistic picture of small town American life in the late 1950s and the beginnings of the Space Race. This film would be valuable in an elementary or middle school history class, because one of its main goals was to be family-friendly, however there may be other movies pertaining to this time period more suited to the more event- and fact-based requirements of a high school history class. Even though it does not necessarily stay true to the beginnings of Homer Hickam Jr.'s life, it is still an engaging and accurate movie, and is very valuable in understanding Hickam's life.

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