

Neighbours

1952 8m10sec *producer, director, animator and music* Norman McLaren, *cinematographer* Wolf Koenig; *with* Jean-Paul Ladouceur and Grant Munro

This moral fable about aggression and war is probably Norman McLaren's most famous and most popular film. Two men (played by fellow NFB animators Jean-Paul Ladouceur and Grant Munro) quarrel over a flower that appears on the boundary of their properties. They build fences to stop the other from trespassing, violently attack each other's wives and children and, finally, destroy themselves in mortal combat. The film ends with a plea to "Love Your Neighbour" in several different languages. The film's power and richness stem from its fusion of realism and formalism. McLaren reinvented a technique (usually called pixillation) for the animation of live actors that had been used in the early days of French cinema for trick effects. Here, it is used with an import its pioneers never anticipated. The passion that underlies the film stemmed from a year McLaren spent in China and, more immediately, from the outbreak of the Korean War. McLaren identified with the Chinese and felt profoundly torn between those feelings and his loyalties as a Canadian. His solution was to create a passionately pacifist film with which everyone could identify. He has said that if all his films were burning in a fire, *Neighbours* is the film he would most wish saved.

AWARDS: Canadian Film Awards – Special Award; Academy Award – Best Short Documentary; Academy Award Nomination – One Reel/Short Subject; AV Trust – Masterwork

Peter Morris

