

Foreign Language Film Festival 2010-2011

Gran Torino



About the movie (subtitled version)

DIRECTOR	Clint Eastwood
YEAR / COUNTRY	2008 / USA
GENRE	Action Drama
ACTORS	Clint Eastwood, Bee Vang, Ahney Her, Doug Moua, Christopher Carley, Sonny Vue

PLOT

The film is about Walt Kowalski, a retired Polish American auto worker and Korean War veteran who has recently been widowed. His life is made more difficult due to the generational conflict between him and his sons' families.

His neighbourhood in Highland Park, Michigan, formerly populated by working-class white families, is now dominated by poor Asian immigrants, and gang violence is quite common. The Vang Lor family, of ethnic Hmong descent, move into the house next door to Walt's. Among the family are streetwise Sue and her shy brother, Thao. Walt wants nothing to do with his new neighbors, but slowly, through a series of events, gets involved in Sue and Thao's lives and develops a relationship with their family.

Among some of the more salient issues dealt with by *Gran Torino* are ethnic prejudice, life and death, and redemption.

Gran Torino was recognized by the American Film Institute as one of the Ten Best Films of 2008, and Clint Eastwood won an award for Best Actor from the National Board of Review. In 2010, the film was named Best Foreign Film at the César Awards in France.

LANGUAGE

Standard American English, some slang and profanity. Hmong.

GRAMMAR

Modal Verbs: Obligation

MUST and HAVE TO

In the present **must** is used when the obligation comes from the speaker. **Have (got) to** is more common when the obligation comes from someone else, often a law or rule. For example:

I must stop smoking (I want to)

I've got to stop smoking (Doctor's orders)

In Italy, motorcyclists have to wear a crash helmet (This is the law)

In the future and the past **have to (had to, will have to)** is the only way of expressing obligation. For example:

There was a bus strike last week so Walt had to walk to work.

If they move to the country, they'll have to buy a car.

MUSTN'T and NEEDN'T/ DON'T HAVE TO

Mustn't expresses a negative obligation (the action is forbidden).

Needn't and **don't have to** indicate that there is no obligation.

For example:

You mustn't drink smoke in the classroom (forbidden)

You don't have to have a licence to ride a bike (no legal obligation)

You needn't wash up. I'll do it later (no obligation)

SHOULD and OUGHT TO

Should and **ought to** are interchangeable and are used when the obligation is not so strong. Often they express advice or duty. For example:

You should write to your family more often.

I ought to stay home and study tonight

NEED

In the present tense **need to** expresses a weaker obligation than **have to** or **must**. It is used mainly in questions and negative sentences. For example:

Need I really study modals again?

You needn't finish painting the house if you're tired.

In hot weather you need to water the flowers every day.

VOCABULARY

Hmong: Southeast Asian ethnic group	Vintage car: an old car in good condition with historical value
Swamp rats: derogatory term for people from river areas of Southeast Asia	You've spoken your piece: you've said your point of view
Chattering: speaking quickly about unimportant matters	Chinks: derogatory term for people with oriental features, usually of Chinese descent
Slopes: derogatory term for people with oriental features	Stuck up: snobbish
Gooks: derogatory term for people from Southeast Asia	Bittersweet: pleasant, but with a bit of sadness
S.O.B.: son of a bitch (bastard)	To hang out with someone: to spend your free time with someone, usually friends
Bro (short for "brother"): slang term for friend or person with whom you have something in common	Watch your back: be careful, protect yourself
Beaners: derogatory term for Mexicans	Mick: term for person of Irish descent
Jew out of something: derogatory term for conning or tricking somebody to get something	Dimwit: a stupid person
Polack: derogatory term for a person of Polish descent	Cannon: slang term for gun
Old school: traditional outlook	Attaboy: said when you do a good job or achieve something
Punk-ass: badly behaved young person	Top notch: optimal, very good
Don't blow this: don't fail this opportunity	Hillbilly: unsophisticated person from a rural area

