

## Fragile Beauty (A)

Audrey Hepburn was the daughter of an English banker and a Dutch baroness, born near Brussels, in Belgium, on May 4, 1929. She was sent to a girls' school near London after her parents' divorce but while she was visiting her mother in Holland during the school holidays in 1939, war broke out. She spent World War II in Nazi-occupied Arnhem, where she attended a local school and received ballet training at the Arnhem Conservatory.

After the war she went to London on a ballet scholarship. With her graceful good looks, she also did some fashion modelling. In the early 50s she joined Felix Aylmer's acting classes and got some small roles in British movies. While filming on the French Riviera, in 1951, she met the French novelist Colette, who insisted she play the role of *Gigi* on Broadway in the Anita Loos adaptation of her novel. She was a great success and this led to a starring part opposite Gregory Peck in the film *Roman Holiday*.



## Fragile Beauty (B)

She won an Academy Award (Oscar) for her role as the princess who finds romance with a journalist in *Roman Holiday*. She was later nominated for four more Academy Awards for her parts in *Sabrina*, *The Nun's Story*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *Wait Until Dark*. In 1954 Audrey started a lifelong friendship with the French fashion designer Hubert de Givenchy. His stylish fashions suited her perfectly and in return her famous name earned him a worldwide reputation. In the same year she married Mel Ferrer, her co-star in the play *Ondine*. They also co-starred in King Vidor's epic *War and Peace*. Ferrer later directed her in *Green Mansions*, which was not a great success, and produced her Oscar-nominated film, *Wait Until Dark* (1967), in which she plays the part of a terrorized blind woman. However, Ferrer played no part in any of the best films of her career. These were *Funny Face*, *Love in the Afternoon*, *The Nun's Story*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *My Fair Lady*.



## Fragile Beauty (C)

Audrey Hepburn and Mel Ferrer divorced in 1968 and Audrey kept custody of their eight-year-old son Sean. The following year she married an Italian psychiatrist, Dr Andrea Dotti, who was nine years younger than her. They made their home in Rome and later in Switzerland. On February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1970, her second son, Luca, was born. Her marriage to Dotti also ended in divorce, in 1982. Although during her career she was nominated for five Oscars, she only won one. Nevertheless, she remained a superstar, despite doing less film work in the 80s. In 1988 she was made a Special Ambassador for the children's charity UNICEF and for the rest of her life devoted much of her free time to it. Shortly after a 1992 visit to Somalia, a country ravaged by war and famine, she was diagnosed with cancer of the colon. She died soon afterwards at her home in Switzerland. Her death was mourned internationally as the loss of one of the favourite film actresses of all time, an icon to style, elegance and dignity.

## Fragile Beauty

In groups of three, A, B and C, answer these questions about Audrey Hepburn.

1. Where was Audrey's mother from?
2. Where was Audrey born?
3. After the war, why did Audrey go to London?
4. Who wrote the novel *Gigi*?
5. In which film did Audrey star with Gregory Peck?
6. How many Oscars was Audrey nominated for?
7. How many did she win?
8. Which French designer's fashions was Audrey associated with?
9. How many times did she marry?
10. What was the name of her first husband?
11. How many children did she have?
12. What were their names?
13. Which charity did Audrey work for?
14. What was the cause of her death?
15. Where was she living when she died?