Friday 6th November

As a shy child growing up in Detroit in the 1930s and 40s, Tom Skerritt discovered a bigger world through school trips to an art museum and an orchestral rehearsal. His family had struggled financially during The Great Depression, but he said these visits introduced him to the world beyond his family, neighbourhood and school.

He joined the US Air Force as his older brother had been a wartime pilot, but he never flew, instead assigned to administrative jobs. After 4 years he went to University in California to study English. He thought he might enjoy writing or directing and joined a play to understand actors, but acting helped him overcome his shyness and he got a bug for acting. He left University without finishing his degree to pursue an acting career.

He became a successful **character actor** appearing in more than 70 films as well as appearing in more than a dozen long running TV shows over 60 years. He usually played supporting roles and became a familiar face through successful films like *Top Gun, Alien, M*A*S*H, Contact* and *A River Runs Through It*. He won an Emmy in 1993 for his role in TV show *Picket Fences*. He died last week at the age of 93.



- What has been the most interesting school trip you've ever been on?
- Can you still have a successful acting career without ever being the lead actor?
- How might being an actor help a shy person?

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