

Spirited Away

Directed by Hayao Miyazaki



This study guide suggests cross-curricular activities based on the film Spirited Away by Hayao Miyazaki. The activities seek to complement and extend the enjoyment of watching the film, while at the same time meeting some of the requirements of the National Curriculum and Scottish Guidelines. The subject area the study guide covers includes Art and Design, Music, English, Citizenship, People in Society, Geography and People and Places.

The table below specifies the areas of the curriculum that the activities cover

National Curriculum			Scottish Guidelines		
	Subject	Level		Subject	Level
Animation	Art +Design	KS2	2 C 3 A+B 5 A-D	Art + Design	Investigating Visually and Reading Using Media – Level B-E Communicating Level A Evaluating/Appreciating Level D
Sound	Music	KS2	3 A 4A-D	Music	Investigating: exploring sound Level A-C Evaluating/Appreciating Level A,C,D
Setting & Characters	English	KS2	Reading 2 A-D 4 C-I	English	Reading Awareness of genre Level B-D Knowledge about language level C-D
Setting & Characters	Citizenship	KS2	1 A-C 4 A+B	People In Society	People & Needs in Society Level A
Japan	Geography	KS2	2 E-F 3 A-G 5 A-B 7 C	People & Places	Human Environment Level A-B Human Physical Interaction Level A-D

Synopsis

When we first meet ten year-old Chihiro she is unhappy about moving to a new town with her parents and leaving her old life behind. She is moody, whiney and miserable. On the way to their new house, the family get lost and find themselves in a deserted amusement park, which is actually a mythical world. Chihiro becomes separated from her parents and finds herself alone and scared in land where strange creatures and spirits live.

Chihiro is befriended by a mysterious boy, Haku, who comforts her and advises her to get a job at the Bath-house run by Yubba, a cranky witch who rules the strange land.

Chihiro must decide; does she fight to survive, save her parents and try to get them all back home safely, or does she wither and die too scared to try. She faces some tough challenges.

Before The Film



Here are some questions to answer before the film:

1. Spirited Away is an animated film, what do you know about animation?
2. What other animated films have you seen?
3. Spirited Away comes from Japan, what do you know about that country?
Make a list of what the class knows about the country.
4. From the title what do you think the film is about?
5. Does it sound like a happy or sad film?

The making of Spirited Away- the film and the director

Spirited Away is by Hayao Miyazaki, one of the greatest and most admired animators and directors in Japan. He has made many famous films including; Laputa: The Castle in The Sky (1986) and Princess Mononoke (1997) and his excellent work has earned him the title of 'Walt Disney of Japan'.

The film has won lots of awards and is the most successful film ever to come out of Japan.

It was the first to break the \$200 million (US) dollar box office mark without even being seen in America.

Released in Japan in 2002, Spirited Away was adapted for an English speaking audience by Walt Disney Studios and Pixar Animation Studios in 2003. It has also been translated in to eight other languages.

Great detail and care went into the making of the original, so the team at Disney worked just as hard, to ensure that Miyazaki's original ideas were not lost in the translation.

Animation



Definition of Animation; *The process of photographing drawings or objects a frame at a time; by changing a drawing or moving an object slightly before each frame is taken, the illusion of motion is realized. To bring to life (source: Oxford English Dictionary)

Animation has been around for a long time. There are lots of different ways to animate pictures, but they all rely on the same idea; showing moving images quickly one after the other. The human eye cleverly tricks the person into believing they are actually seeing a moving image. Japan makes a lot of animation films that are sometimes called anime.

Hayao Miyazaki was inspired to make the film after he went on holiday with some friends and their ten year old daughter. The young girl sparked the director's imagination and he set to work writing the adventures of Chihiro.

Although there is exciting new technology to help make animation films, Miyazaki still uses many of the traditional methods, such as storyboards. A storyboard is like a cartoon strip.

It is a set of simple drawings that helps plan the plot, and shows written notes about action, camera shots and movements and the sound needed. Miyazaki worked closely with his team of artists and animators, telling them exactly how he imagined everything to look; for example how an animal might move, sound, or speak. This storyboard is often called a blueprint.

The animators draw the characters and scenes of the film adding the detail that connect all the scenes of the storyboard. Once the director and his team have all the characters and background scenes completed, they can begin filming. Animation films are built up one frame at a time. Characters are drawn on transparent sheets called cels. A separate background is made then each time a movement is created, a new cel drawing is filmed against the background. Film usually runs at 24 frames per second, so each drawing is shot for two frames. This means every second of Spirited Away needs 12 drawings!

Hayao Miyazaki worked hard to ensure that every movement in the film is realistic. In one particular scene when Haku is a serpent, Chihiro tries to force open his mouth to feed him medicine. The director describes to the animators it would be like trying to force open a dog's mouth and wants this expressed clearly in the film. None of the team really understands what he means. The animators visit a vet's practice and using a video recorder they capture the vet playfully putting her hand in a dog's mouth. Back at the studio, they watch what they recorded and it helps them achieve exactly what the director imagined.



Animation Activities

- How is Spirited Away different to the other animated films you've seen?
- Make your own storyboard. Choose something important that happens in the film, Chihiro meeting Haku or the Stink Monster visiting the Bathhouse, on the storyboard draw what happens in pictures.
- Create a spirit character that might live in the bathhouse. Make a list of how your spirit might sound, move, talk, and what it likes and dislikes. Work with a partner/small group to discuss how you can make them more realistic. Use a mix of paints, pencils and a collage affect to add colour to your spirit.

Sound

The audio or sounds heard in the film are made up of dialogue, sound effects, music and atmospheres. Lots of hard work went into the sounds and music, each splash of water or strange animal noise was especially recorded. The sound of all the characters footsteps were created by one person wearing different shoes on each foot, while the sounds of cooking were recorded in a hotel kitchen.

For the music, Miyazaki hired a concert hall in Toyoko and used 60 microphones to make sure every sound played by the New Japan Philomonic Orchestra, was captured.

Sound Activities

- Why do you think Miyazaki worked so hard on creating the sound effects? Do you think they sounded real?
- Work in a group and try to remember what sounds and types of music you heard? Why do you think you remember them? Did some of you notice different sounds? What affect did the noises/music have?
- Have a go at making your own sound effects, record footsteps, someone drinking, some eating, or the atmosphere outside your classroom in the corridor. Play them back to the class, can they guess what they are.



Japanese to English - Translation

In the original film the characters spoke Japanese. When Disney took on the challenge to adapt the film for an English speaking audience the characters voices had to be changed.

A new team of professionals were brought together to rework Spirited Away, and just like the making of the original, it was a lengthy process.

Writers were hired to translate the script from Japanese to English; they often asked the original team back in Japan for help with interpretation. In one particular case the writers were a little confused; the original film talks of something called a 'hanko seal' which is a stamp that is often used in Japan to sign letters or important documents. The writers thought it was the animal seal! To clear up any further mix-ups the writers decided to call it the 'golden seal'.

Setting and Characters



Spirited Away is set in two different worlds, a modern day Japan where Chihiro and her family live, and the parallel mysterious land where weird and wonderful creatures and spirits lurk.

Some people have described Spirited Away as a classic fairy tale, like Alice in Wonderland, because the lead character goes on a journey of discovery and learns a lot about herself. Do you agree?

Setting and Characters Activities

- Do you think the film is like Alice in Wonderland?
- Miyazaki has used a cyclical plot in Spirited Away, meaning the story ends at the same or similar place it began, so goes full circle. Can you think of any other films or stories that use this type of plot?
- Each key character in the film faces a set of challenges. Use the chart below to record what these problems are and how each character overcame them.

Character	What problem did the character face?	How did they resolve them?
Chihiro		
Haku		

Chihiro's character develops a lot throughout the film she stops being grumpy and selfish and becomes patient and learns to look after herself. At the end of the film she is excited about going to a new school and making new friends, is no longer frightened.

- Miyazaki based Chihiro on a real ten year old little girl do you think the character is believable? Are there any similarities between you and Chihiro? What would you have done in Chihiro's situation?
- While in the mysterious world, Chihiro makes friends with all different kinds of people and animals, Haku, Kumaji, No Face and lots of other odd creatures in the bath house. If you were a creature in the film what you would you look like and what would you do?

Life in Japan

Miyazaki chose to set the film in a bathhouse, an important place where people go to relax in large hot tubs. The characters that live and work there don't wear shoes or



socks inside; they eat their meals out of bowls with chopsticks, sleep on mats on the floor and often bow when greeting each other. Most of the characters wear a Kimono, the traditional dress. Japanese writing, lanterns and masks can also be seen in the film. All these things are examples of Japanese culture.

Life in Japan Activities

- What did you learn about Japan from the film? Where is Japan? How many people live there? What is the weather like? What do they eat? Make a graffiti wall about everything you've learnt about Japan. Use the school library to do some research.
- Write a letter or draw a poster for Chihiro or Haku telling them all about yourself and where you live.

The River God

In Japan for thousands of years, people have believed that gods and spirits live all around them in the rivers, the trees and houses. Miyazaki used these beliefs and his own experience of helping to clear a river near his home that had become filled with waste, to create the smelly Stink Monster. The character is actually a River God who has become bunched up with grime, pollution and rubbish from the polluted river.



- As a class put together a mural showing the Stink Monster when he was dirty and polluted, and then the River God when he had been cleaned up. Label the pictures with the reasons the creature became so dirty and what can be done to keep him clean.
- What does your school do to ensure that it is free from litter and rubbish? Put together a newsletter or poster for your school reminding people to put litter in the bin and to keep the school tidy.

Haku

The character of Haku cannot remember where he came from, so is unable to go back home. As the story unfolds, Chihiro and Haku realise that he is actually a River Spirit, and has been unable to go back because the river he used to live in, has been filled so new apartments can be built.

How would you feel if you were Haku?

Research your local area and find out what it was like 20 years ago. What new buildings/roads have been built? What countryside has been built on? Look at old maps and compare how it looked then and how it looks now.



Go on a trip with your class walk round the local neighbourhood with your class and try making a list of old and new buildings are some currently being built? Now draw a map or ariel view of what you think the area will look like in another 50 years.