

Ponyo

Study Notes



Directed by: Hayao Miyazaki
Certificate: U (contains very mild threat)
Running time: 103 mins
Release date: 12 February 2010

Synopsis

Ponyo is a unique take on Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*. Five-year-old Sosuke finds a little fish near his seaside home in Japan and decides to keep it. But Ponyo is no ordinary goldfish – she is a magical princess and her father is the king of the ocean. As Ponyo and Sosuke become friends, Ponyo's desire to be human grows stronger. However, her father, at first upset that she ran away, now believes the humans have kidnapped her and calls his wave spirits to return Ponyo to him.

Before seeing the film

- 1.** How well do you know the story of The Little Mermaid? Have you seen the Disney film? Read a picture book version or Hans Christian Andersen's original. When you see Ponyo, look for similarities with the classic fairy tale.
- 2.** Have you seen any other animated films by the director Hayao Miyazaki? His films include Howl's Moving Castle, Spirited Away and My Neighbour Totoro. Use the internet to find images from these three, as well as Ponyo. What do you notice about the animation style? How do these films look different to other animated films you have seen at the cinema or on DVD?
- 3.** Ponyo is set in Tomonoura, a small fishing village in Japan. Locate both places on a map and look for images of the fishing village. Have you ever been to the coast in this country? Look for images of fishing villages in the UK and compare them with Tomonoura. How are they different? What are the buildings like in Tomonoura?

After seeing the film

- 1.** Miyazaki has a unique animation style. What did you notice about the way characters are drawn? Look at some images of Sosuke and his mother in the film. Look closely at their eyes, noses and mouths, paying attention to how different expressions are drawn. Choose a character to draw or create a new character using the same drawing style.
- 2.** What else did you learn about Japan from watching the film? Use books and the internet to research Japan in more detail. How many people live there? How far is it to travel from the UK? What traditional costumes or clothing are there? What is the food like? Imagine you have gone on holiday to Japan. What would you do? Design and write a postcard to a friend or family member telling them about your trip.
- 3.** What similarities with The Little Mermaid did you notice? Talk about what happened at the beginning, middle and end of Ponyo. What were the most important events? Create a picture book that retells Ponyo's story. Draw up to eight pictures to show key points in the story and write one or two sentences to accompany each drawing.

Written by: Matthew Poyton